

MGA Public Financing Act summary.pdf

Uploaded by: Antoine, Joanne

Position: FAV



Summary of Public Financing Act as Drafted

Threshold to Qualify for Small Donor Matching Program		
	Senate	Delegate
Number of Donations	250	150
Amount of Donations	\$15,000	\$7,500
*Must forgo contributions greater than \$250 and only accept contributions from individuals (no money from corporations, unions, PACs, etc.). Multiple contributions from one person cannot exceed \$250.		

Match Ratios		
	Senate	Delegate
First \$50	6 to 1	6 to 1
\$51-\$150	2 to 1	2 to 1
\$250 cap	Accepted, no match	
*Only contributions from Maryland voters are matched. No match provided for last \$100.		

	Senate	Delegate
Match Cap	\$150,000	\$90,000
*Once the cap is reached, candidates can continue to raise donations from individuals of \$250 or less but will not receive any matching funds. The match cap is per election.		

Example Candidate Performance		
	Total Raised if Candidates Reach Program Cap	Donors & Amount to Reach Program Cap
Senate	\$187,500 (\$150,000 match + \$37,500)	Raise \$100 donations from 375 donors
Delegate	\$110,000 (\$90,000 match + \$20,000)	Raise \$80 donations from 250 donors

SB 416 - Public Financing Act - State Senate and H

Uploaded by: Antoine, Joanne

Position: FAV

February 18, 2021

Testimony on SB 416
Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates
and Matching Fund Revisions
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 416, which would create a small donor matching system for General Assembly candidates so that they can run free from the influence of wealthy donors.

Since the disastrous *Citizens United* decision and its progeny, America's elections have become deluged with outside spending. Wealthy interests have driven up the cost to compete in elections at every level, boxing out candidates who do not have wealthy benefactors but do have support in their communities. Those that can make it through this money gauntlet, must then spend increasingly large percentages of their work days - time that should be spent legislating and hearing the concerns of constituents - on the phone chasing big-money donors.

Maryland is no different. In our [2019 study](#), we analyzed fundraising by winning legislators and found that fundraising expectations for candidates continue to rise. From the years 2015-2018, Senators, on average, received a contribution total of \$266,000.00. This amount of contributions was a slight decrease from the 2014 election cycle, but it is still a significant amount of money raised for state senate seats on average. Delegates received an average contribution total of \$125,499.00, which is a 64% increase from the 2014 election where the average amount fundraised was \$79,878.00.

Maryland should be concerned about the rise in candidate fundraising totals. When the cost to run for office is high, candidates often need to rely on mega donors or corporate interests to be competitive. SB 416, the Public Financing Act, would help to alleviate many of these problems by amplifying the voices of regular Marylanders and giving candidates they support the ability to compete with others backed by big-money interests.

Candidates opting into the public financing program would first have to show sufficient community interest by raising small donations from Maryland voters, refraining from taking donations from non-individuals and donations of \$250 or below. Once they meet qualifying thresholds, at least 250 eligible contributions totaling at \$15,000 for State Senators and at least 150 eligible donations totaling \$15,000 for State Delegates, and the State Board of Elections authorizes the distribution of money after verifying that they have qualified, they would then be matched by funds from the Fair Campaign Financing Fund, at a rate of 6-to-1 or 2-to-1, depending on the size of the contribution, with no match provided for the last \$100. Candidates for State Senator would be eligible to receive \$150,000 per election and candidates for State Delegate eligible for \$90,000 per elections, amounts that we believe would ensure candidates are able to run competitive campaigns in any part of the state.

Because SB 416 could significantly raise the voices of regular Marylanders to compete with the big-money spending unleashed by *Citizens United*, we ask the committee for a favorable report.

SB 416 - Our Revolution Maryland - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Balachandran, Suchitra

Position: FAV



Feb. 16, 2021

Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
SB 416 - Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates and Matching Fund Revisions
Position - Favorable

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee:

We are in strong support of a small-donor funded public financing model for state delegates and senators and the conversion of the current gubernatorial public financing program into a small donor model. Maryland citizens and tax-payers will agree that the investment of \$50 million over a four-year period to empower voters and usher in accountable government will be money well spent.

Our democracy is dying. Powerful corporate interests finance many elected officials and influence legislation at all levels of government. As a result, the citizenry have lost faith and become disengaged from their government; this only serves to exacerbate the problem. You are in position to change this dynamic.

Maryland has been one of the states in the forefront of empowering voters with the 2012 task force and the 2013 enabling legislation that permitted counties to enact a public campaign financing program for the county council and county executive races. The 2018 election cycle in Montgomery County has shown the success of the program. But the success is not simply that some publicly financed candidates were successful in winning their races, but in the profound impact that this mode of campaigning has had on our electorate.

For two years, Our Revolution Prince George's organized with then Councilmember, now Delegate, Mary Lehman to enable a small donor funded program in Prince George's. We helped to organize a briefing before the bill was introduced and find effective advocates at committee hearings. One of the most powerful testimonies at a hearing came from a Montgomery County candidate who was running for an at-large seat on the council. She testified that she had launched her campaign at the Langley Park farmer's market, which is on the border of Montgomery and Prince George's counties. Many customers at that market are poor and buy produce with food stamps. The candidate spoke to these voters and explained the program to them. She described how their eyes lit up when they learned that a five dollar contribution would multiply to twenty five dollars for the candidate. These voters had always seen themselves as recipients, never as donors, and for the first time they envisioned how they could collectively gather five dollar contributions to perhaps elect a member of their own community to office. This electrifying testimony had a profound impact on everyone in the room.

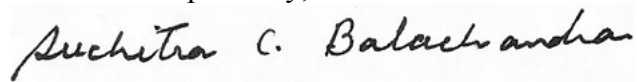
Our Revolution Maryland sees the small donor campaign financing program as a way to awaken our electorate from our collective corporate-induced stupor and empower us with the ability to elect grassroots activists into every seat. The final success of this program will be one where the money needed to run an election for a delegate or senator will not range from \$100,000 to \$150,000 but next

to nothing, because we will have an engaged and informed electorate and there is no cost to casting a vote.

Meanwhile, Maryland taxpayers will agree that the roughly \$50 million cost of this program over a four-year period will be money very well spent, indeed.

We ask for a favorable vote and thank Senator Pinsky for this bill.

Submitted respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suchitra C. Balachandran". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Suchitra Balachandran
ORMD State Organizing Committee

CDC Testimony_Public Financing Act_In Favor.pdf

Uploaded by: Braganca, Meagan

Position: FAV



**Legislative Committee/ Election Reform Issues Team
Columbia Democratic Club
Testimony on Public Financing Act - HB0536/SB0416**

Senate Sponsors: Guzzone & Pinsky

Senate Committee: Edu, Health, & Enviro / Budget & Taxation

House Sponsors: Acevero

House Committee: Ways & Means

Persons Submitting: Meagan Braganca, Legislative Committee Chair

Position: Favorable

Please support **Public Financing Act - HB0536/SB0416**, as written. Howard Countians voted overwhelmingly to establish public financing of our county elections, as have multiple other jurisdictions. These measures democratize our society by allowing those without connection to big-moneyed interests to still raise enough to be competitive with other candidates.

Nationwide, more than 80% of elections are won by the candidate who raises the most money. How can citizens believe in government when their voices are irrelevant?

We urge support for the Public Financing Act to expand the range of offices for which public financing will apply.

Thank you.

- CDC legislative committee - Electoral Reform Issues team
- Jake Burdett, CDC President

Columbia Democratic Club

References:

Represent Us: Corruption is Legal in America
https://youtu.be/5tu32CCA_lg & <https://Represent.Us/TheProblem>

FiveThirtyEight: How Money Affects Elections.
<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/money-and-elections-a-complicated-love-story/>

OpenSecrets: Unprecedented donations poured into 2020 state and federal races.

<https://opensecrets.org/news/2020/11/2020-state-and-federal-races-nimp/>

Brennan Center: Campaign Finance Victories in 2020 Elections

<https://brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/campaign-finance-victories-2020-elections>

SB0416_Represent_Maryland_Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Caruso, Anthony

Position: FAV



BILL: SB0416

BILL TITLE: Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates and Matching Fund Revisions

BILL SPONSOR: Senators Pinsky, Guzzone

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs; Budget and Taxation

HEARING DATE: February 18, 2021

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF SB0416

Anthony Caruso, Member
Represent Maryland

Represent Maryland is an all-volunteer, member and individual donor-funded group of activists and advocates who fight for democracy at the local and state level. We formed in 2015 to fight against the influence of big money in politics and to ensure that everyone can participate in our democratic system of governance, regardless of financial status. Public Election Funds are the #1 solution that Represent Maryland advocates for in order to expand and secure democracy for the future.

Although our voter roles have grown over the last 150 years to include nearly all citizens of the USA, access to the resources needed to successfully run for public office has narrowed. Currently, successful candidates must be willing to accept large money donations from the smallest group of people or be able to fund their campaign themselves. There is nothing democratic about that.

Through courting big money donors, candidates-turned-lawmakers remain out of touch with the needs and struggles of the average voter. This is very apparent in policy decisions that help corporations and the wealthy while putting more burdens on the working class.

If this legislature wants the future of Maryland to be a democratic one, where all people's voices are heard and valued, you must act now to strengthen our only existing alternative funding source from which average people of various backgrounds and experience can fund their campaigns and win. Including candidates for state senator and delegate into the existing governors public election fund will ensure more people of average background, wealth and connection have a real opportunity to win their race, and therefore have input and influence over the future of Maryland. Maryland was built by a citizen legislature of hard working farmers and factory workers. We ask that you find this bill favorable in order to keep it that way.

Sincerely,
Anthony Caruso, Member
Represent Maryland
Maryland Voter-LD6

Represent Maryland is a grassroots anti-corruption group of citizen advocates that #FightForDemocracy in Maryland. Our democracy solutions include: Public Election Funds, Independent Redistricting, Special Elections, Ranked Choice Voting, Increased Ethics and Transparency, and Increased Voter Participation. Learn more about our work at www.RepresentMaryland.org

Authorized by Represent Maryland PAC, T Miller, Treasurer

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0416.pdf

Uploaded by: Conner, Charles

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

CHARLES R. CONNER III, ESQ.
Director of Government Affairs

JOEL N. BELLER
Deputy Director of Government Affairs

BILL NO.: **SB 416**

TITLE: Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates
Candidates and Matching Fund Revisions

SPONSOR: Senator Pinsky

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 18, 2021

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 416 – Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates and Matching Fund Revisions. This legislation amends the Public Financing Act to include candidates for State Senator and member of the House of Delegates in the public campaign financing program and modifies other aspects of the program.

Public financing is key to establishing a level playing field and taking the influence of money out of politics. Baltimore County Executive Olszewski has made clear that pay-to-play politics have no place in either Baltimore County or the State of Maryland. For this reason, the County is in the process of establishing a campaign finance model for local elections. Public financing ensures that money will not prevent qualified and talented candidates from seeking local elected leadership, and furthers the fight to establish a level playing field in participation in local government.

SB 416 would expand the pool of candidates eligible to use the campaign finance program when seeking elected state positions. It would also increase funding for the program, ensuring a more robust and financially secure system. Public financing not only reduces the influence of moneyed interests by allowing voters to pool their finances, but gives the people the opportunity to fund a stronger candidate pool.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 416. For more information, please contact Chuck Conner, Director of Government Affairs, at cconner@baltimorecountymd.gov.

GMOM_SB416test_020221.pdf

Uploaded by: Cooper, Charlie

Position: FAV



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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE –
IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 416
PUBLIC FINANCING ACT – STATE SENATE AND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
CANDIDATE AND MATCHING FUND REVISIONS**

February 18, 2021

Get Money Out (GMOM) is an all-volunteer organization that was established just over seven years ago. We now have signed up more than 9,000 citizen supporters. We work in Maryland toward the goals that all citizens should have equal access to the ballot and an equal say in governance.

The United States has endured several decades of the vicious cycle of big-money campaign financing, high-dollar lobbying, and policies that promote economic inequality. The percentage of wealth and income held by the top 1% had skyrocketed *before* the pandemic struck while working families have not shared in the growth of the economy. Now the situation is even more extreme.

According to CNBC: “The top 1% saw their share of wealth rise to 38.6% in 2016 [while] the share of wealth held by the bottom 90% of Americans has been falling steadily for 25 years, hitting 22.8% in 2016 from 33.2% in 1989.”ⁱ Now we have seen 660 U.S. billionaires add more than \$1 trillion to their wealth in the pandemic.ⁱⁱ The bottom line is that campaigns are expensive from the point of view of nearly all candidates but dirt cheap from the point of view of multi-national corporations and billionaires.

The decade since the *Citizens United v. FEC* decision has exacerbated everything bad about the vicious cycle. A billion dollars of dark money has flowed through federal campaigns. The Brennan Center now reports that dark money may be underreported by a factor of seven and has labeled a new category “black hole money,” that is, money spent on politics and never reported in the campaign finance system, amounting to as much as \$650 million.ⁱⁱⁱ

Moreover, we are now more susceptible than ever to foreign sources of campaign spending. PACS and SuperPACs can spend unlimited sums on false advertising – now multiplied by Internet platforms faster than fact-checkers can keep pace. In the 2018 mid-term federal elections, just ten families were responsible for 7% of all spending.

The top 100 contributors in the 2020 federal election each gave between \$3.2 million and \$218 million for a total of \$1.48 billion – excluding any dark/black hole money they may have contributed or spent. That’s about 10% of all election spending. It would take only one or two of these people to intervene in a Maryland election to render our election finance landscape unrecognizable and overwhelm the efforts of local campaigns.^{iv}

The essence of democracy is equality of representation among citizens. The ever-rising level of economic inequality – combined with our corrupt campaign finance system, voter suppression campaigns, and the attribution of constitutional rights to artificial entities (such as unions and corporations) – threatens to destroy our system of democratic republicanism.

Senate Bill 416 can be a major step forward on leveling the playing field so that voters can make meaningful contributions to the candidates of their choice, and talented and civic-minded people of all economic backgrounds have a fair chance to be elected to the Senate or House of Delegates. *If adequately funded*, the public finance mechanism would provide some protection against invasions of outside money and would help make small donors – i. e., voters – matter much more. Candidates would have a real incentive to talk to voters and get small donations, which would then be matched by a multiple from the Fair Campaign Financing Fund. The smallest donations would be multiplied the most.

This bill carries a substantial fiscal note, and it would represent a major change in the way we finance our campaigns for the State legislature. But we believe that the threats to democracy that we have seen since the *Citizens United v. FEC* decision will broaden and deepen. Dark money, foreign money, and SuperPACs with massive financial power will come to Maryland. This will become a crisis that must be addressed as a high priority of State government. The cost is a little more than 0.2% of the State’s general fund revenues. We request a favorable report.

ⁱ <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/09/27/the-top-1-percent-of-americans-now-control-38-percent-of-the-wealth.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://ips-dc.org/u-s-billionaire-wealth-surpasses-1-1-trillion-gain-since-mid-march/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/dark-money-2020-election>

^{iv} <https://www.opensecrets.org/elections-overview/biggest-donors>

SB0415 and SB0416 2021 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Koul, Michelle

Position: FAV

Feb 16 2021

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in favor of SB0415 and SB0416 and public campaign financing programs at every level of government. Studies have shown that not only does it reduce the influence of big business and PACs on our candidates' decisions, but it increases voter involvement and turnout, encourages candidates to run voter-centered campaigns and increases the number and the diversity of candidates. In this testimony I would like to illustrate the need for this type of election fund by discussing some of the spending that took place in the 2018 election cycle. The data described herein was obtained from <https://campaignfinance.maryland.gov/>.

WISE (Women Indivisible Strong Effective) is a group of over 700 women from AACo who reside primarily in District 33. In 2018 WISE monitored campaign donations and spending and tried to expand disclosure about the type and amounts of funding that our local candidates were accepting. Incumbents had funds rolled over from past election cycles that were available for immediate expenditure. For example, Jerry Walker, a sitting Anne Arundel county council member at the time, was able to accumulate almost \$200,000 to enter the D33 delegate race, with Del. Sid Saab in second place with almost \$70,000. Four D33 challengers (all women that did not hold any kind of public office at the time), were barely breaking \$5,000 at that same point. Jerry Walker obtained 68% of his donations from businesses, while incumbent delegates Tony McConkey and Sid Saab had 18% and 25% from businesses, respectively. Although the donor profiles changed some by November, it was clear that incumbents had a major advantage due to their business contacts. The fact that sitting county and state officials draw donations from businesses is no surprise, as they are often making decisions that affect those businesses.

In the 2018 D33 delegate race where seven candidates were running for three seats, it turned out that the losing challengers were only 0.6 and 1.2% of the total votes behind the least favored successful incumbent (Del. Saab). If those challengers were not ultimately outspent by Del. Saab by *five to one*, one of them could have easily won his seat. (Senator Reilly outspent his challenger seven to one.)

We support public campaign financing as proposed in SB0415 and SB0416 as a way to lessen the influence of big money on election outcomes. As the public becomes more educated about what it means to be a small donor candidate, it is our belief that candidates will take part in this program not because it will provide financing levels that will compete with corporate donations, but because voters will be using the small donor nature of the candidate's financials as a litmus test for who they are willing to support. A public donor fund will ultimately create a more diverse field of candidates who are accountable to the individual voter.

Thank you for all you do for Maryland,
Dr. Michelle Koul
312 Bowline Ct
Severna Park

SB0416-IndivisibleHoCoFAV-O'Keeffe.pdf

Uploaded by: O'Keeffe, Carol

Position: FAV



February 18, 2021

**Testimony on SB 416
Public financing Act-Matching Fund Revisions
(Maryland Fair Elections Act)
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs**

Position: Favorable

Indivisible Howard County-an organization with over 700 members- supports SB 416 because the bill addresses one of the fundamental issues of democracy infrastructure: reducing the influence of big money in politics and enabling candidates without large donor backing to seek office elected office.

We have all seen, in recent weeks, how vulnerable our democracy has grown and how urgent is the need to strengthen its underpinnings. A key component of a representative democracy is that it is, in fact, representative of the electorate. Fair representation cannot occur unless people from all walks of life and from all economic circumstances truly have the opportunity to seek elected office.

Since the Supreme Court ruled in the *Citizens' United* case, we have seen a steady erosion of the opportunity to run for public office for those without wealth or wealthy backers. The only way to counteract that erosion is to provide a public source of financing for candidates. SB 416 will provide the opportunity to candidates for the General Assembly that has already been provided to gubernatorial candidates. Maryland must join the ranks of states with the most inclusive voting laws.

We urge a favorable report.

Carol B. O'Keeffe
Indivisible HoCoMD

SB0416_Senate_and_House_of_Delegates_Financing_MLC

Uploaded by: Plante, Cecilia

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0416
PUBLIC FINANCING – STATE SENATE AND HOUSE OF DELEGATES CANDIDATES
AND MATCHING FUND REVISIONS**

Bill Sponsor: Senator Pinsky

Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0416 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members work hard to support candidates for office in Maryland. We knock doors and phonebank and write postcards, and do anything we can to ensure that Marylanders participate in state and local elections. We believe in fair elections. We do NOT believe in big money in elections, nor do we want our elected officials to be beholden to any voices but those of their constituents.

Any expansion of public financing for elections of Senate and House of Delegates candidates is not only preferred, but required in this day where the interests of taxpayers and completely eclipsed by those of big business and special interests. Given how very much the legislation passed at the state level affects the lives of everyone in Maryland, it is even more critical that our elected representatives are really representative of the people. Their campaigns should be financed by small donations from their constituents.

Everyone benefits from public financing. More candidates will feel that they can compete, so you don't get the few wealthy, or highly connected people running. Better decisions will be made by those who are elected because they don't have to 'give back' to the few businesses and donors who supported them. Marylanders can make their voices heard more directly because their small donations really count.

It's more than time to do this. We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

HTL-MD-Testimony-SB0416-2021-02-16-FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Saydjari, Omar

Position: FAV



defending democracy using peaceful civil resistance

February 16, 2021

**Testimony on SB 0416
Public Financing Act—State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates and Matching Fund Revisions
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

Position: Favorable

Hold the Line Maryland strongly supports SB 0416. Hold The Line Maryland is a grassroots, all-volunteer organization, dedicated to preserving and insuring democracy through diverse actions, including the support of campaign-finance reform, election protection measures, and the expansion of enfranchisement. Democracy is under active assault, and we must do everything in our power to hold the line established by the founders of this great nation.

SB 0416 is an important part of campaign-finance reform, essential to restoring political capital to *all* people, not just those whose accumulated wealth and power allow them to control the outcomes of elections and thus further increase their wealth and power.

According to a 2019 report by the Brennan Center for Justice:

Two great trends are at odds in the financing of elections. In *Citizens United v. FEC*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that corporations have a First Amendment right to make unlimited expenditures in elections—raising the prospect of a flood of newly-legal special interest spending. In his sweeping dissent, Justice John Paul Stevens warned that people “may lose faith in their capacity, as citizens, to influence public policy” in the face of massive corporate political spending.

But there is a second, far more hopeful trend: the rise of small donor democracy. In the 2008 campaign, millions of small contributions energized the presidential campaign. For the health of our democracy, we must find a way to boost this positive trend so it is not overwhelmed by the new reality of special interest cash.

There is nothing more un-American than favoring a select few over the majority. Such imbalance damages the foundations on which this country was built. We urge you to support this legislation, which will enable us to continue to elect great leaders who will be able to spend their time executing the will of their constituents instead of pandering to special interests with deep pockets.

We urge a favorable report.

Kim and Sami Saydjari
Hold the Line Maryland

SB416_MDPIRG_FAV_EmilyScarr_FairElexMGA.pdf

Uploaded by: Scarr, Emily

Position: FAV



Emily Scarr, Maryland PIRG Director
SB416: Public Financing Act - State Senate and House of Delegates
Candidates and Matching Fund Revisions
Thursday, February 18th, 2021
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
FAVORABLE

Maryland Public Interest Research Group (Maryland PIRG) is a citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state.

In 2013, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 which made it possible for Maryland counties to build small donor campaign finance programs locally. Since, Montgomery County, Howard County, Prince George's County, and Baltimore City have all established these new campaign finance systems, and Montgomery County has successfully run their first election using the new system. In 2020 Baltimore County voted to establish a program, which the council will finalize in 2021. **Now, it is time to modernize and expand Maryland's public financing system at the state level.**

There is no doubt that our democracy is in a fragile state. Faith in government has dramatically declined, as has voter participation and civic engagement. Hyper-partisan politics, gerrymandering and corporate influence have pushed our federal government into stalemate. Small donor public financing of elections is not a silver bullet to solve our democracy's problems, but it's a good start. By creating alternatives to the traditional funding model for elections and encouraging more participation we can disrupt the stranglehold money has on our democracy, and Maryland counties are leading the nation to do so.

This bill is modelled after the success of similar programs in the state and country, with adjustments to meet needs of state races. A Fair Elections program will be better for candidates and elected officials, better for the public, and better for Maryland.

We believe that in Maryland, the amount of money your family makes - your race, your gender - should **not** determine the volume of your voice in our elections. But the rise of corporate and large campaign contributions has forced Maryland elected officials and candidates to be increasingly dependent on these donors, giving them less time to hear from and serve their constituents.

This bill creates a voluntary program which enables candidates to run for office with small donations from their constituents and remaining competitive with those who accept large and corporate contributions. This serves the dual purpose of reducing corporate and large donor campaign spending and re-engaging the community in the electoral process. And with a Fair Election program in place, we hope to expand opportunities to run for office, so candidates of all backgrounds can run based on the strength of their ideas, not access to money.

In 2019, [Maryland PIRG Foundation released a report](#) which found that Montgomery County's Fair Elections program showed strong results in its first use. The report looks at data from 57 candidates for county office, 35 of whom participated in the program and 24 qualified to receive matching funds.[i]

Key findings:

- Candidates who qualified received nearly twice as many donations from Montgomery County residents than those not participating in the program (850 vs 434).

- Candidates participating in the program received an average contribution of \$86 compared to \$1,145 for non participating candidates.
- Candidates running for county council seats were able to use the small donor system to run competitive races. The average contribution, including matching funds, for candidates participating in the program was similar to the average contribution for candidates accepting large contributions. (\$306 vs \$292)

These types of programs are popular, effective, and gaining momentum.

BACKGROUND: Recent decisions from the Supreme Court have unleashed a wave of mega donors into the electoral process and we are feeling the effects at the local level. The meteoric rise of election spending since these Supreme Court decisions means candidates and elected officials are often trapped spending an increasing amount of time fundraising from big donors, giving them less time to hear from and serve their constituents. It has also exacerbated the already shrinking faith that citizens have in their elected officials and government.

An October 2017 Poll from the University of Maryland and the Washington Post found that Americans, regardless of political affiliation agree the money in politics is a big issue and are not happy with the way our democracy is going.[ii]

- 36% said they are not proud of the way democracy works in America, up from 18% in 2014.
- Money in politics was listed as the #1 cause for dysfunction in the U.S. political system, with a whopping 96% of participants blaming money in politics for causing dysfunction and 94% of participants blame wealthy political donors for causing dysfunction.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Small donor public financing enables candidates to run a competitive race without relying on large or corporate donors. In addition to local programs across Maryland, similar programs have proved effective in Connecticut and New York City, where more than 90% of candidates frequently participate in the program.[iii]

The fight to overturn Citizens United will be long, but this is something you can do now. There is no doubt that our democracy is in a fragile state, especially down the road in D.C. You have an incredible opportunity to empower Maryland residents in our elections and build a democracy for the people. I hope you take it.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

[i] Fair Elections in Montgomery County: Matching Program Encourages and Empowers Small Donors, Maryland PIRG Foundation, September 2019, <https://marylandpirg.org/reports/mdp/fair-elections-montgomery-county-0>

[ii] Most Americans say politics have reached a dangerous new low point, Washington Post and University of Maryland, October 28, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/page/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2017/10/28/National-Politics/Polling/release_497.xml

[iii] States, Counties, and Municipalities Empower Small Donors and Curb the Power of Big Money in Politics, Demos, June 28, 2017, <http://www.demos.org/publication/public-funding-electoral-campaigns-how-27-states-counties-and-municipalities-empower-sma>

Testimony on SB 415 and SB 416 - Opposed.pdf

Uploaded by: Ennis, Ella

Position: UNF

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chair
and Members of the Committee on
Education, Health & Environmental Affairs
Senate of Maryland
Annapolis, Maryland

RE: SB 415 – Public Financing of Elections for Governor – OPPOSED
SB 416 – Expanding Public Funding to Senate & House Races – OPPOSED

Dear Chair Pinsky and Committee Members,

I am very strongly opposed to mandating using taxpayers' dollars to fund political campaigns for State level elections of Governor (SB 415) and State Senate and House of Delegates (SB 416).

The current voluntary contributions fund is o.k. because each person can decide if they wish to contribute to the fund. But forcing taxpaying citizens to pay \$4 million a year in taxes for political campaigns is WRONG.

Our State and Country are in in the middle of a once in a century pandemic and the borrowed money that is providing payments to citizens, unemployment, rental assistance, medical services, and COVID 19 tests and vaccines will have to be repaid and come from somewhere. Guess where? The taxpayers.

The legislation itself has several curious provisions – including allowing “eligible private contributions” would that mean contributions from out of state? PACS? It doesn't appear to restrict “in-kind” contributions just not allow them to count toward the base qualifying contributions. The fund would provide funding for 2 campaigns in the Primary Election and 1 campaign in the General Election. Is that 2 campaigns for each political party? Unaffiliated? Or is the bill providing for funding one campaign in the General Election? Who would decide which political party's candidates would receive the funding if in fact a campaign from each political party qualifies? If you want to run for office you should raise your own campaign funds. If citizens support you they will contribute to your campaign, but no way should they be forced to.

This legislation is unnecessary, exorbitantly expensive, and under current conditions unconscionable. Please give SB 415 and SB 416 an UNFAVORABLE report.

Sincerely,
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