

February 4, 2021

Testimony on SB 332
Campaign Finance - For-Profit Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Providers - Disclosure of
Contributions
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 332 which would expand the State Board of Elections authority to enforce filing requirements to include Medicaid reimbursement contracts with for-profit substance abuse and mental health treatment providers under Title 14.

There is growing frustration by citizens over the role that special interests are playing in our campaigns. Particularly in situations where it can appear that there is a conflict of interest, Maryland does not have unlimited ability to fight back against the surging tide of special interest donations. Public businesses are businesses that make or have a single contract with a State or local governmental entity involving cumulative consideration of at least \$200,000. They are required to submit statements to SBE regarding any applicable contributions.

Contributions from for-profit health treatment providers who have a Medicaid reimbursement contract should function in the same manner. These contributions help build a relationship between the donor and the elected official, and deserve the same scrutiny and public access. Citizens have a right to know who is seeking to influence their government, especially when they, like most health-care interests, spend an overwhelming amount of money trying to influence decisionmakers in Maryland.

Maryland has a well-developed system of campaign finance law, a system that ensures everyday citizens can trace who is making donations and what special interest voices are being heard in that process. SB 332 would build on that system by extending transparency in government contracting.

We urge a favorable report.