

February 18, 2021

Testimony on SB 632
Election Law – Contested Elections
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 632 which would increase transparency in campaign finance reporting around the recount process.

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. The recount process should be required to adhere to the same level of scrutiny.

The recount process is an important part of Maryland's democratic government; it gives candidates the chance the opportunity to petition for a recount after an election where the margin of victory for a race is narrow. This process provides reassurance in the result but is costly and currently. Given the amount of money spent in instances where recounts are needed, it is critical that citizens can see who is funding these efforts. It is also critically important that we ensure those candidates opting into public financing programs are able to adhere to the confinements provided by these programs.

SB 632 aims to establish disclosure requirements through the creation of contested elections committees that are on par with those in place for candidate and other similar entities - increasing reporting and transparency in Maryland's campaign finance law. It also provides enabling authority so counties can establish rules governing the use of public funds in cases where a recount is needed for candidates participating in a local public financing program. These candidates would be required to establish contested election committees, likely with more regulations than candidates not opted into these programs in order to adhere to the overall goals of these programs.

Transparency is important in all aspects of a functioning democracy, including the recount process. SB 632 would implement critical reporting requirements and we urge a favorable report