



**Testimony for the House Environment and Transportation
Committee
January 21, 2021**

**HB 292 – Public Ethics – Gifts and Lobbyist Registration
(Public Integrity Act of 2021)**

JOSEPH SPIELBERGER
PUBLIC POLICY COUNSEL

FAVORABLE

AMERICAN CIVIL
LIBERTIES UNION
OF MARYLAND

3600 CLIPPER MILL ROAD
SUITE 350
BALTIMORE, MD 21211
T/410-889-8555
or 240-274-5295
F/410-366-7838

WWW.ACLU-MD.ORG

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS
JOHN HENDERSON
PRESIDENT

DANA VICKERS SHELLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDREW FREEMAN
GENERAL COUNSEL

The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 292, which would prevent members of the Legislative Branch from receiving from a donor or sponsoring entity food or beverages exceeding a total of \$50, and raise the cost of a lobbyist's registration to \$300 with an exception for nonprofit entities.

This is a simple, common sense bill that will help reduce the oversized influence that large donors and special interest money have over legislators while helping create a more equitable system where all Marylanders, regardless of wealth, status, or connections, have a fair chance to petition their government.

The ACLU of Maryland believes that a government of the people and by the people must be visible to the people. Maryland must do more to strengthen the voices of its residents because the free exchange of ideas is among the greatest tools that empower communities to advocate for change. That means that to the extent possible, important decisions affecting the future of our state must be negotiated in public, instead of behind closed doors.

HB 292 will help make legislators more accountable to the people, and make laws and policies more responsive to the needs of the public. In doing so, it will help ensure that our government operates in a manner that is accountable, efficient, and fair.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 292.