

February 8, 2021

Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of HB 344: Open Meetings Act – Maryland Transparency Act of 2021

Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee.

As a voter, parent, engaged citizen and frequent attendee at governmental proceedings at all levels of government, I fully support the changes contained within this bill.

Open Meetings Act: As members of a Democracy, we all should strive to bring about fairness and transparency to and within all of our government's operations and processes.

At the very least any government agency planning to hold a meeting should make the attendees and constituents aware of their agenda at least 48 hours before a meeting. Sharing the proceedings via the web for at least a year. These steps do not sound like a very heavy lift for our government's officials. Transparency and efficiency should already be cooked into the recipe of any fair, free and open democracy.

I would really appreciate this law being taken a step further and applied to the county level at both the local county council and boards of education (BOE). Trickle down does not seem to make it all the way through the ecosystem of our democracy. From talking with other parents, I have learned that this is another area of government where the need already exists. Compliance issues; Abuses of power like censorship is an issue that exists in BOE meeting proceedings within several counties. And as standard practices like Robert's Rules of Order, The Open Meetings Act and standard parliamentary procedures are routinely not adhered to by officials at local levels of government. Often resulting in complaints and legal action needing to be taken by both sides of local government proceedings. We deserve better from our government and its officials.

We fully support any bill that brings more equity, fairness and transparency to government proceedings and processes. Please return a favorable report for HB 344.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of my testimony today.

Mr. Richard Ceruolo
Parent and Advocate for real, systemic change to our education system.