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on Artistic Property



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February 11, 2021

BILL: HB 344, Open Meetings Act - Requirements for State Agencies and Local Boards of Elections (Maryland Transparency Act of 2021)

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations

POSITION: Letter of Information

HB 344, Open Meetings Act - Requirements for State Agencies and local boards of elections (Maryland Transparency Act of 2021) requires State agencies in the Executive Branch and local boards of elections to make publicly available on their websites an agenda and all meeting materials at least 48 hours in advance of each open meeting. In addition, the bill also requires State agencies and local boards of elections to make publicly available on their websites live video or audio streaming of each portion of a certain meeting, a certain recording for a certain time period.

While the Maryland State Archives fully supports the idea of increasing transparency by making recorded meetings accessible to citizens, the decisions must be memorialized in the form of minutes, summary notes, and transcripts. Having a written record of government activity increases transparency by providing a historical record over time.

The Maryland State Archives is very supportive of the idea of making publicly available meeting minutes and agendas. However, we stress that video and audio recordings should not replace the written record. We are also concerned that many smaller agencies, boards and commissions may not have the necessary technology infrastructure to maintain recordings after they are live streamed. We request that you consider amending the bill to remove the portion of the bill which requires that video or audio recordings be retained.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have further questions, please contact Maya Davis, 443-370-9914 or [maya.davis@maryland.gov](mailto:maya.davis@maryland.gov).