



Peter Franchot
Comptroller

TESTIMONY OF COMPTROLLER PETER FRANCHOT

Support - House Bill 265 - General Assembly - Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office

Ways and Means Committee

January 18, 2021

Chairman Kaiser, Vice Chairman Washington and members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to provide testimony in **support** of **House Bill 265 - General Assembly - Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office**. I would like to thank Delegate Moon for sponsoring this legislation.

House Bill 265 proposes a constitutional amendment that will change the procedure for filling vacant seats within the General Assembly. Currently, local central committees possess the power to recommend and appoint new legislators instead of the citizens of the district. Under House Bill 265, power is returned to the people by allowing them to choose their own representatives through a special election.

The delegates and senators who comprise the Maryland General Assembly don't work for their local central committees. Nor do they work for the Democratic or Republican parties. They work for the taxpayers who pay their salaries and expenses, and that's who should - and must - have the sole privilege of choosing their elected leaders.

I am particularly concerned **how** these appointments have been made. Central Committees often quite literally take votes in backrooms, hidden away from the public. Most recently an appointee was chosen by four of seven committee member votes to represent a district that is home to over 117,000 Marylanders.

It's time to do away with these secretive, un-democratic insider elections that are often already determined and are decided by a handful of votes. Each and every one of these vacancies must be filled by a special election to restore the fundamental principles of democracy. For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request a **favorable report** for House Bill 265. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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