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**Testimony in Support of HB 1066:
Local Public Campaign Financing - Expansion to Additional Offices**

TO: Del. Kaiser, Chair, and members of the Ways and Means Committee
FROM: Jennifer Dwyer, Deputy Executive Director
DATE: February 19th, 2021
POSITION: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1066. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots, nonprofit organization with over 125,000 members and supporters statewide. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. Please note our strong support for this bill.

Fundraising is often one of the most difficult and least enjoyable tasks of an elected official's campaign. HB 1066 empowers our counties and the city of Baltimore to create opt-in public financing programs for school board, state's attorney, and a number of other local races.

Public financing has already proven wildly popular across Maryland with both candidates and the public. Montgomery County's Fair Elections program for County Executive and Council was used in 2018 by several incumbents running for reelection who had formerly fundraised in the traditional manner but preferred this new system. Many voters became first-time donors in the cycle and the donor pool became more diverse, including more people of color and lower-income residents.

By turning ordinary residents into major donors to a campaign, HB 1066 benefits residents by encouraging candidates to spend more time engaging one-on-one with them and empowering residents to make significant contributions to their favorite candidates to help them get elected. The program also benefits candidates by allowing them the freedom to focus on serving and interacting with residents throughout their campaign and after their election without feeling forced to split their time between traditional fundraising and earning votes.

For a relatively low cost of a few dollars per resident per year, small donor programs multiply \$10, \$25, or \$50 donations from residents several times over. Increasing the impact of grassroots donations in this way encourages greater participation from residents in local elections and frees up considerable time for candidates and elected officials to serve the people of Maryland. Just as we pay for poll workers and voting machines, this is a critical investment in the health of our democracy.

Progressive Maryland believes that public financing of elections at all levels is a win-win for voters and for candidates. We encourage a favorable report on HB 1066.