



Feb. 19, 2021

House Ways and Means Committee

HB 1066 – Local Public Campaign Financing – Expansion to Additional Offices

Position - Favorable

Dear Chair Kaiser, Vice-Chair Washington and Members of the Committee:

Our Revolution Maryland and Fair Elections Maryland strongly support the statewide enabling expansion of our current public campaign financing law to all local races. HB 1066 will permit counties that have already legislated public campaign financing programs for executive and council races to expand them to additional local races and will permit counties that have yet to legislate a program to choose which races they wish to enact legislation for.

Our democracy is far from robust. Powerful corporate interests influence legislation at all levels of government, and are entrenched in many decision-making bodies nationwide. As a result, the citizenry have lost faith and become disengaged from their government, and this only serves to exacerbate the problem. While Maryland makes every attempt to increase access to the voting booth: same day registration; mail-in ballots; and expanded early voting, citizens who have given up on their government simply do not show up to vote.

Public campaign financing changes this dynamic in two ways. It gives candidates with bold vision and community roots the ability to finance their run for office. More importantly, the structure of the small-donor program encourages and incentivizes grass roots candidates to take their campaigns into communities that may never had face to face conversations with candidates. The expansion of races eligible for public campaign financing will greatly expand the communities that will be reached by candidates – communities that have long been excluded and sidelined by our current system that forces candidates to spend significant time raising funds from affluent voters and diminishes the time they can spend in communities with the greatest need.

Maryland has been one of the states in the forefront of empowering voters with the 2012 task force and the 2013 enabling legislation that permitted counties to enact a public campaign financing program for the county council and county executive races. It is time to expand the legislation if we are to make the urgent strides we need to empower and engage our citizens towards a fully functioning democracy.

We ask for a favorable vote.

Submitted respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suchitra C. Balachandran". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Suchitra Balachandran

ORMD State Organizing Committee