

SB0358_Represent Maryland_Favorable.pdf

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Position: FAV

REPRESENT MARYLAND

.ORG

#FIGHT FOR

DEMOCRACY

BILL: SB0358

BILL TITLE: Public Financing Act – State Senate and House of Delegates

BILL SPONSOR: Senators Pinsky, Lam, Kagan, Smith, Waldstreicher, Elfreth, and Guzzone

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

POSITION: FAVORABLE

HEARING DATE: February 23, 2022

Testimony in favor of SB0358

Represent Maryland is an all-volunteer, member and individual donor-funded group of activists and advocates who fight for democracy at the local and state level. We formed in 2015 to fight against the influence of big money in politics and to ensure that everyone can participate in our democratic system of governance, regardless of financial status. Public Election Funds are the #1 solution that Represent Maryland advocates for in order to expand and secure democracy for the future.

Although our voter roles have grown over the last 150 years to include nearly all citizens of the USA, access to the resources needed to successfully run for public office has narrowed. Currently, successful candidates must be willing to accept large money donations from the smallest group of people or be able to fund their campaign themselves. There is nothing democratic about that.

Through courting big money donors, candidates-turned-lawmakers remain out of touch with the needs and struggles of the average voter. This is very apparent in policy decisions that help corporations and the wealthy while putting more burdens on the working class.

If this legislature wants the future of Maryland to be a democratic one, where all people's voices are heard and valued, you must act now to strengthen our only existing alternative funding source from which average people of various backgrounds and experience can fund their campaigns and win. Including candidates for state senator and delegate into the existing governor's public election fund will ensure more people of average background, wealth and connection have a real opportunity to win their race, and therefore have input and influence over the future of Maryland. Maryland was built by a citizen legislature of hard working farmers and factory workers. We ask that you find this bill favorable in order to keep it that way.

Sincerely,
Anthony Caruso, Member
Represent Maryland
Maryland Voter-LD6

Represent Maryland is a grassroots anti-corruption group of citizen advocates that #FightForDemocracy in Maryland. Our democracy solutions include: Public Election Funds, Independent Redistricting, Special Elections, Ranked Choice Voting, Increased Ethics and Transparency, and Increased Voter Participation. Learn more about our work at www.RepresentMaryland.org

Authorized by Represent Maryland PAC, T Miller, Treasurer

SB0358-IndivisibleHoCo-O'Keefe.pdf

Uploaded by: Carol O'Keefe

Position: FAV



**Testimony on SB 358
Public financing Act-Matching Fund Revisions
(Maryland Fair Elections Act)
Before the
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs
Committee
February 23, 2022**

Position: Favorable

Indivisible Howard County-an organization with over 700 members- supports SB 358 because the bill addresses one of the fundamental issues of democracy infrastructure: reducing the influence of big money in politics and enabling candidates without large donor backing to seek office elected office.

We have all seen, in recent years, how vulnerable our democracy has grown and how urgent is the need to strengthen its underpinnings. A key component of a representative democracy is that it is, in fact, representative of the electorate. Fair representation cannot occur unless people from all walks of life and from all economic circumstances truly have the opportunity to seek elected office.

Since the Supreme Court ruled in the *Citizens' United* case, we have seen a steady erosion of the opportunity to run for public office for those without wealth or wealthy backers. The only way to counteract that erosion is to provide a public source of financing for candidates. SB 358 will provide the opportunity to candidates for the General Assembly that has already been provided to gubernatorial candidates. Maryland must join the ranks of states with the most inclusive voting laws.

We urge a favorable report.

Indivisible Howard County

Carol B. O'Keeffe

Indivisible HoCoMD

SB0358_Public_Financing_MLC_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR SB0358 PUBLIC FINANCING – STATE SENATE AND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Bill Sponsor: Senator Pinsky
Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair
Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0358 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members work hard to support candidates for office in Maryland. We knock doors and phonebank and write postcards, and do anything we can to ensure that Marylanders participate in state and local elections. We believe in fair elections. We do NOT believe in big money in elections, nor do we want our elected officials to be beholden to any voices but those of their constituents.

Any expansion of public financing for elections of Senate and House of Delegates candidates is not only preferred, but required in this day where the interests of taxpayers and completely eclipsed by those of big business and special interests. Given how very much the legislation passed at the state level affects the lives of everyone in Maryland, it is even more critical that our elected representatives are really representative of the people. Their campaigns should be financed by small donations from their constituents.

Everyone benefits from public financing. More candidates will feel that they can compete, so you don't get the few wealthy, or highly connected people running. Better decisions will be made by those who are elected because they don't have to 'give back' to the few businesses and donors who supported them. Marylanders can make their voices heard more directly because their small donations really count.

It's more than time to do this. We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

SB0358_Emily Scarr_Maryland PIRG_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Scarr

Position: FAV

Maryland PIRG

Maryland Public Interest Research Group

Emily Scarr, Maryland PIRG State Director

**Testimony for SB0358: Public Financing Act – State Senate and House of Delegates
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, February 23rd, 2022
Position: Favorable**

Maryland PIRG is a state based, non-partisan, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state.

Last year, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Maryland Fair Elections Act, modernizing and funding the state's small donor public campaign finance system for the gubernatorial race. Nearly a decade ago, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 which made it possible for Maryland counties to build small donor campaign finance programs locally. Since, Montgomery, Howard, Prince George's, and Baltimore Counties, as well as Baltimore City, have all established these new campaign finance systems, and Montgomery County has successfully run their first election using the new system.

Now, it is time to modernize and expand Maryland's public financing system to include elections for the Maryland General Assembly's State Senate and House of Delegates.

There is no doubt that our democracy is in a fragile state. Faith in government has dramatically declined, as has voter participation and civic engagement. Hyper-partisan politics, gerrymandering and corporate influence have pushed our federal government into stalemate. Small donor public financing of elections is not a silver bullet to solve our democracy's problems, but it's a good start. By creating alternatives to the traditional funding model for elections and encouraging more participation we can disrupt the stranglehold money has on our democracy, and Maryland counties are leading the nation to do so.

This bill is modeled after the success of similar programs in the state and country, with adjustments to meet needs of state races. A Fair Elections program will be better for candidates and elected officials, better for the public, and better for Maryland.

The amount of money your family makes, your race, and your gender should **not** determine the volume of your voice in our elections. But the rise of corporate and large campaign contributions has forced Maryland elected officials and candidates to be increasingly dependent on these donors, giving them less time to hear from and serve their constituents.

This bill creates a voluntary program which enables candidates to run for office with small donations from their constituents and remaining competitive with those who accept large and corporate contributions. This serves the dual purpose of reducing corporate and large donor campaign spending and re-engaging the community in the electoral process. And with a Fair Election program in place, we hope to expand opportunities to run for office, so candidates of all backgrounds can run based on the strength of their ideas, not access to money.

In 2019, [Maryland PIRG Foundation released a report](#) which found that Montgomery County's Fair Elections program showed strong results in its first use. The report looks at data from 57 candidates for county office, 35 of whom participated in the program and 24 qualified to receive matching funds.¹

Key findings:

- Candidates who qualified received nearly twice as many donations from Montgomery County residents than those not participating in the program (850 vs 434).
- Candidates participating in the program received an average contribution of \$86 compared to \$1,145 for non participating candidates.
- Candidates running for county council seats were able to use the small donor system to run competitive races. The average contribution, including matching funds, for candidates participating in the program was similar to the average contribution for candidates accepting large contributions. (\$306 vs \$292)

These types of programs are popular, effective, and gaining momentum.

BACKGROUND: Decisions from the Supreme Court, like *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon*, have unleashed a wave of mega donors into the electoral process and we are feeling the effects at the state level. The meteoric rise of election spending since these Supreme Court decisions means candidates and elected officials are often trapped spending an increasing amount of time fundraising from big donors, giving them less time to hear from and serve their constituents. It has also exacerbated the already shrinking faith that citizens have in their elected officials and government. [The removal of restrictions on aggregate contributions limits in Maryland](#) and nationwide has led to increased spending by mega donors on local elections. [Our research found that this decision would ultimately contribute to \\$1 billion in increased spending through the 2020 elections from less than 3,000 mega donors.](#)

[A 2018 survey from the Center for Public Integrity](#) found that 88% of Americans want to reduce the influence large campaign donors wield over lawmakers

An [October 2017 Poll from the University of Maryland and the Washington Post](#) found that Americans, regardless of political affiliation, agree that money in politics is a big issue and are not happy with the way our democracy is going.

- Money in politics was listed as the #1 cause for dysfunction in the U.S. political system, with a whopping 96% of respondents saying it had "A lot" (65%) or "some" (31%) to do with the problem.
- 36% said they are not proud of the way democracy works in America, which is double what it was 3 years prior (18% in 2014).

[A 2016 poll from Pew Research Center found](#) (76%) of Americans – including identical shares of Republicans and Democrats – say money has a greater role on politics than in the past. The same poll found that 64% of Americans thought the high cost of campaigns discourages good candidates from running for office.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Small donor public financing enables candidates to run a competitive race without relying on large or corporate donors

We respectfully request a favorable report.

¹ [Fair Elections in Montgomery County: Matching Program Encourages and Empowers Small Donors](#), Maryland PIRG Foundation, September 2019.

2022-02-23 SB 358 (Support).pdf

Uploaded by: Hannibal Kemerer

Position: FAV

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STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

FACSIMILE NO.

WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NO.

410-576-6584

February 23, 2022

TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Hannibal G. Williams II Kemerer
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: SB 358 – Public Financing Act – State Senate and House of Delegates – **Support**

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and distinguished members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, we write to urge your favorable report on Senate Bill 358. This legislation, introduced by Senator Pinsky, would extend the public financing program to candidates for the General Assembly.

Public financing was extended to gubernatorial candidates last session (Senate Bill 415 (2021)) and tends to reduce a candidate's need to raise campaign finances through moneyed interests. It inures to the benefit of both General Assembly aspirants and voters alike.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 358.

cc: Committee Members

SB 358 to EHEA support Public Campaign Financing -

Uploaded by: Henry Bogdan

Position: FAV

February 23, 2022

Testimony on Senate Bill 358
Public Financing Act – State Senate and House of Delegates
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Position: Favorable

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide organization comprised of over 1300 member nonprofit agencies, associations and institutions, and our purpose is to support and enhance the effectiveness of the State's more than 30,000 nonprofit groups in carrying out their missions of public and community service. We urge your support for Senate Bill 358.

Nonprofit organizations typically evolve from individuals seeking to improve some aspect of life in their communities or to meet the needs of fellow citizens. Their effectiveness hinges on the credibility and trust that is crucial to their support by the public. The programs they provide, or the people for whom they are advocates, also depend on the ability of government to work effectively, with sustained support and engagement of the public.

As an association we believe that public trust and confidence in governmental institutions, and participation in our political process, is seriously threatened by growing skepticism and disenchantment with an electoral process that seems increasingly dominated by the need to fund-raise.

More and more the public generally assumes that campaign contributions and fund-raising are an essential part of having an effective voice in Annapolis.

The continuing decline of public trust in government and engagement in the electoral process is a trend that must be reversed, and faith that our legislature and other public institutions act in the public and not special interests is critical.

We urge you act favorably on Senate Bill 358.

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0358.pdf

Uploaded by: Joel Beller

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

JOEL N. BELLER
Acting Director of Government Affairs

JOSHUA M. GREENBERG
Associate Director of Government Affairs

MIA R. GOGEL
Associate Director of Government Affairs

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 358

TITLE: Public Financing Act – State Senate and House of Delegates

SPONSOR: Senator Pinsky

COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 23, 2022

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 358 – Public Financing Act – State Senate and House of Delegates. This legislation would expand the elected State level offices that qualify for public financing.

In his first month in office, County Executive Olszewski pledged that he would enact a local campaign financing system to level the playing field for all willing, engaged community members to get involved in local government. In December 2021, the Fair Election Fund was established. Beginning in 2026, those lacking connections to large donors will not be precluded from having a competitive run for County Council and County Executive, and County voters will hear the voices of community advocates who are able to capitalize on their strong ties to the community.

SB 358 will expand the State public financing program to include candidates for State Senate and the House of Delegates. Expanding campaign financing will encourage a stronger, larger, and more diverse pool of candidates to represent their communities in some of State government’s most critical positions.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 358. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov.

SB358_MDSierraClub_fav - 23Feb2022.pdf

Uploaded by: Josh Tulkin

Position: FAV



Maryland Chapter
P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Testimony on: SB 358 – Public Financing Act – State Senate and House of Delegates
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 23, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on SB 358. The bill expands the Public Financing Act and the Fair Campaign Financing Fund to include candidates for State Senator and member of the House of Delegates.

The Sierra Club and its members care about both the natural and human environments, including ending racial and social injustice. As a grassroots organization, we believe that the dominant force in campaigns for the General Assembly should not be money, but people and their aspirations for Maryland and their communities. Unfortunately, this goal cannot become reality as long as potential candidates must either self-finance (which many simply cannot do) or rely on large contributors.

Maryland's Public Financing Act worked well for a candidate for Governor in 2014, has recently been improved, and is being used by at least one candidate for Governor this year. Montgomery County started a similar program for county offices in 2018, and Howard County is offering a similar program this year. Prince George's County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County have created similar programs for future elections.

Experience has demonstrated that offering a voluntary program that matches small campaign contributions does enable people of more diverse backgrounds to become candidates. Expanding the Public Financing Act will help the General Assembly become even more representative of all the wonderful diversity in our state's population.

Seeing candidates relying on large donors can lead to suspicion that they act on behalf of special interests or have hidden agendas, even when that is in fact not the case. By lessening the influence of money in General Assembly elections, this bill will give voters increased confidence that candidates are sincere when they make policy commitments. The result will be increased confidence in government at a time when that confidence is sorely needed.

This bill does not directly constrain the escalating cost of elections, but it will help shift the focus of General Assembly campaigns away from the interests of large donors and back to the needs and desires of everyday constituents.

Voting is the foundation of our democracy, and we believe it is essential to our democracy and to racial and social justice to make the ability to campaign for public office accessible to all regardless of background, personal wealth, or connections with moneyed interests.

We urge a favorable report on SB 358.

Rich Norling
Chair, Political Committee
Rich.Norling@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

SB 358 - Public Financing Act - State Senate and H

Uploaded by: Morgan Drayton

Position: FAV

February 21, 2022

Testimony on SB 358
Public Financing Act – State Senate and House of Delegates
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 358, which would create a small donor matching system for General Assembly candidates so that they can run free from the influence of wealthy donors.

Since the disastrous *Citizens United* decision and its progeny, America's elections have become deluged with outside spending. Wealthy interests have driven up the cost to compete in elections at every level, effectively boxing out candidates who might not have access to wealthy benefactors but do have broad support within their own communities.

Maryland is no exception. In our [2019 study](#)¹, we analyzed the winning candidates' fundraising totals and found that monetary expectations for candidates continue to rise. From the years 2015-2018, winning senatorial candidates received a contribution total of \$266,000.00 on average. This was a slight decrease from the 2014 election cycle, but it is still a significant amount of money for the everyday citizen aspiring to run. Delegates received an average contribution total of \$125,499.00, which is a 64% increase from the 2014 election (where the average amount fundraised was \$79,878.00).

Marylanders should be concerned about the rise in candidate fundraising totals. When the cost to run for office is high, candidates often need to rely on mega donors or corporate interests to be competitive. SB 358 would help amplify the voices of regular Marylanders, giving the candidates they support the ability to compete with the candidates backed by big-money interests.

Candidates opting into the public financing program would first have to show sufficient community interest by raising small donations from Maryland voters, refraining from taking donations from non-individuals and donations of \$250 or below. Once the State Board of Elections verifies a candidate has met the qualifying thresholds - **at least 250 eligible contributions totaling at \$15,000 for State Senators and at least 150 eligible donations totaling \$15,000 for State Delegates** – that candidate's donations would then be matched by funds from the Fair Campaign Financing Fund, **at a rate of 6-to-1 or 2-to-1**, depending on the size of the contribution, with no match provided for the last \$100. Candidates for State Senator would be eligible to receive \$150,000 per election and candidates for State Delegate eligible for \$90,000 per elections, amounts that we believe would ensure candidates are able to run competitive campaigns in any part of the state.

Because SB 358 will significantly amplify the voices of regular Marylanders to compete with the big-money spending unleashed by *Citizens United*, we ask the committee for a favorable report.

¹ <https://www.commoncause.org/maryland/resource/campaigns-in-maryland-does-it-still-cost-a-lot-to-win/>

SB 358 – Public Financing Act – State Senate and H

Uploaded by: Nancy Soreng

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEES

SB 358 – Public Financing Act – State Senate and House of Delegates

Position: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng President

Date: February 23, 2022

The League of Women Voters believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should: enhance political equality for all citizens; ensure maximum participation by citizens in the political process; protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns; provide voters sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices; ensure transparency and the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections; enable candidates to compete equitably for public office; ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public; and combat corruption and undue influence in government. The League continues to look for ways to limit the size and type of contributions from all sources as a means of combating undue influence in the election process.

This bill would amend the Public Financing Act to expand the list of candidates authorized to receive public contributions from the Fair Campaign Financing Fund to include candidates for State Senator and member of the House of Delegates. Public funding of campaigns promotes equality for all citizens and protects representative democracy by leveling the playing field for candidates, regardless of their personal wealth or connections.

Additionally, this bill incentivizes candidates for statewide office in Maryland to seek widespread support among their constituents by providing maximum levels of matching funds for small private contributions, with decreasing levels of matching as the size of the individual contributions increase.

The League of Women Voters urges a favorable report on SB 358.