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**BILL NO.:**            **HB 395**

**TITLE:**              Public Records – Retention and Inspection – Communications  
(Transparency in Public Records Act of 2022)

**SPONSOR:**         Delegate Stewart

**COMMITTEE:**      Health and Government Operations

**POSITION:**        **SUPPORT**

**DATE:**              February 15, 2022

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 395 - Public Records - Retention and Inspection - Communications (Transparency in Public Records Act of 2022). This legislation would alter the definition of “public record” and define “record” to include certain written electronic, recorded audio, and video communications.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has led to significant reliance on virtual information. The need to access information from the safety of one’s home necessitates enhancements in the virtual availability of information. By including audio, video, and written electronic correspondence as records available to the public, HB 395 would allow Marylanders to adapt to the reliance on virtual information brought on by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Baltimore County has championed transparency by enhancing virtual access to County workgroups, expanding community input on the County’s budget, and working with community leaders to keep the public informed of the work being done on their behalf. With the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the County worked quickly to make public resources available to residents who were unable to access them in person. It quickly became clear that what started as a public health response brought untold benefits in transparency, accountability, and accessibility. Beyond the pandemic, it is the responsibility of government to utilize modern technologies to keep the public informed.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 395. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at [jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov).