

February 8, 2022

Testimony on HB 498
Election Law - Campaign Finance - Protection of Contributor Information
Ways and Means

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 498 which would prohibit the use of Maryland contributor information available on campaign finance reports or statements from commercial solicitations.

Access and transparency is particularly necessary for our State Board of Elections (SBE), who oversee the process most fundamental to our democracy: elections. Currently, campaign finance reports filed with SBE are maintained in an electronic storage format widely and easily accessible to the public. This transparency ensures voters know who and what entities are funding candidates. It also ensures contributors are able to verify that their donations are reported.

As we continue to advance reforms like public financing of elections throughout the state which will increase the contributions being made by individuals, taking steps to ensure their information is protected will help in efforts to encourage greater participation. If Marylanders do not have faith that their information will be properly secured, that interaction will slow – robbing citizens of valuable services and opportunities and robbing the government of legitimacy.

Marylanders must be able to trust that the State Board of Elections will be a dependable custodian of their contributor information. HB 498 helps to protect that trust while continuing to advance the values of transparency in our election.

We recommend a favorable report.