



February 4, 2022

House Ways and Means Committee  
HB 488 – Local Public Campaign Financing – Expansion to Additional Offices

Position: **Favorable**

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

I write as a Co-Chair of the Anne Arundel chapter of Our Revolution Maryland. Along with Fair Elections Maryland, we have advocated expansion of public campaign financing since our founding. We have supported various incarnations of enabling legislation to allow counties to expand their systems to ever more local races. We believe strongly in public campaign financing as the simplest path to promote greater integrity in government and more public confidence in the system. Most crucially, it can empower the types of candidates who have been unable to compete in privately financed elections because they lack the resources or connections to raise the money needed to be taken seriously and to reach voters. On Jan. 5, 2022, our County Executive, Steuart Pittman, introduced Resolution 1-22 asking the County Council to place a charter amendment on the 2022 ballot to create a system for public financing of County elections.

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 has 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,

Art Holt

Co-chair Anne Arundel

Our Revolution Maryland