

**Written Testimony on HB0949:  
Campaign Finance, Campaign Finance Reports, Prohibition on Disclosure**

**to  
House Ways and Means Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates**

**March 8, 2022**

Honorable Committee: Good afternoon,

My name is Steve Bolen. I am a registered voter in Maryland's State District 9A. In full disclosure, I am also a candidate for Delegate, District 9A.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony on House Bill 0949: Campaign Finance, Campaign Finance Reports, Prohibition on Disclosure.

I strongly oppose this bill and urge an unfavorable vote with prejudice.

The very cornerstone and bedrock of our democracy is an open and transparent government accountable to the people. I am a constituent of the State of Maryland and a proud American citizen who has defended our country and seen the atrocities committed by autocratically controlled states. I mean this sincerely, and with all due respect, but this is a horrific bill. It targets, and ultimately undermines, the very confidence in the institutions that we rely on to safeguard our democracy. We expect our elected leaders to be open, honest, and transparent. We give them extraordinary power to influence and shape policies that will affect our communities for decades by electing them to office. In return, we expect them to be honest with us on where they stand on the issues that affect us so that we can choose leaders that reflect and represent our values.

The bill refers to the "secrecy" of the ballot. And, it is true that in America, we respect the sanctity of the vote. But, it is not only people and individuals who contribute to political campaign funds, but also businesses, organizations, and special interest groups. And it is people who vote, not businesses. So, relief from financial disclosure for these groups strictly does not apply based on the secrecy of the ballot.

As individuals, it is our civic obligation to vote. But, that is not the case for contributing to a political campaign. People are free to donate or not. And there are other ways a person can support a candidate without making a financial contribution. They can volunteer to knock on doors, make phone calls, organize rallies, and do many other things.

Elected leaders and those running for office should be proud of the sponsors contributing funds to their campaigns, and those sponsors should be proud of their candidates. There should be no reason for either to hide a campaign contribution.

I would ask anyone who supports this bill: “What are you hiding?” “What are you afraid of?”  
“What is it that you don’t want your constituents to know about you?”

This anti-democratic bill should not get a favorable vote in this committee.

Thank you for your time and for listening to me.

Respectfully,

Steve Bolen  
Howard County, Maryland