



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov
FAX 410-313-3051

February 8, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY OF SUPPORT**: House Bill 488: Local Public Campaign Financing- Expansion to Additional Offices

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington and Members of the Committee,

I would like to express my appreciation for Delegate Feldmark's consistent leadership on public campaign financing equity over the last several sessions.

Throughout my career, I have been a steadfast supporter of publicly funded political campaigns. As a member of the County Council, I supported ballot question A, in which Howard County voters overwhelmingly supported the establishment of a public financing campaign system. I also voted in favor of CB30-2017 which created the Citizens' Election Fund. The bill was later vetoed by the former County Executive. Several Council colleagues and I successfully overrode that veto to ensure that in 2022, public financing would become a reality.

After I was elected in 2018, my Administration established the fund in my first budget as County Executive. Since then, our Administration and the County Council has dedicated \$1.25 million to ensure the viability of the Citizens' Election Fund for **all** County Executive and County Council candidates. Access to funding should not preclude candidates for other county offices who seek to serve their community. I'm pleased that House Bill 488 would expand public campaign financing to **all** local races and level the playing field across the board. Candidates running for States Attorney, Sheriff, Register of Wills, Judge of the Circuit Court, Clerk of the Court, Judge of the Orphan's court and Board of Education should have the same access to current public financing model.

Although the public financing ballot measure passed in 2016, the 2022 election cycle is the first-time eligible candidates can utilize the funding. Recently in Howard County, a technical error in the original legislation did not legally allow the dispersal of funds within a certain timeframe. In my commitment to the Citizens' Election Fund, in January 2022, I co-sponsored bi-partisan legislation with all five Howard County Councilmembers to support emergency legislation that will clarify the process of how the program is administered and will disperse funding immediately to all eligible candidates. Similarly, Montgomery County established their public campaign financing program in 2014 and has since filed several bills to amend aspects of their original legislation to match their intent.

I fought to make this program a reality and with the leadership of Delegate Feldmark, I hope public financing can be expanded for all elected races county races up and down the ballot. Publicly funded elections are good for democracy and enabling accessibility for all is good for our community.

I appreciate your consideration and urge a **favorable** report on HB 488.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive