

January 25, 2022

Testimony on HB 93
Candidates for Offices of Municipalities and Common Ownership Communities - Reports of Donations and Disbursements
Ways & Means

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 93, which would strengthen campaign finance reporting requirements for municipalities and establish similar regulations for cooperative housing corporations, condominiums, and homeowners associations.

While there are a number of municipalities that require reporting for candidates, HB 93 expands to cover those that do not have processes in place. The proposed legislation makes a small but important change to campaign finance law. It does not require that these municipalities to establish a process. It instead simply ensures that candidates in these municipalities file their reports with the State Board of Elections.

This change is important for public access to campaign data. In almost every election year, Common Cause handles a surprising number of questions from the public about access to municipal campaign reports. This confusion has grown as certain municipal reports are being posted by the State Board leaving those in other municipalities in search of information. This is an issue during municipal elections, when the public wants to easily find out who is donating to campaigns. It is also an issue as a local official runs for higher office, where the record of their previous fundraising efforts is not available in the same location as their state level campaign reports.

HB 93 also goes a step further by establishing the same requirements for cooperative housing corporations, condominiums, and homeowners associations where developers spend a great deal of time influencing these races.

This is a small but important change for transparency in campaign finance laws. We request a favorable report on HB 93.