

WDC Testimony-SB176-2023-FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Beth Tomasello

Position: FAV



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**Senate Bill HB0176 – Insufficient Number of Candidates for a Primary Election
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee – February 16, 2023
FAVORABLE**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC) for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic clubs in our state, with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

As the foundational principles of democratic government are under siege at the federal level and in many states, WDC has established a new *ad hoc* committee, Advancing Democracy in Maryland, to advocate for a menu of legislation that empowers voters, creates equality of voice and representation, and ensures the responsiveness of government institutions. We are proud that Maryland is generally in the forefront of pro-democracy reforms; yet we can always do better.

WDC's work to advance democracy in Maryland is guided by many of the recommendations of the 2020 report, [Our Common Purpose: Reinventing Democracy for the 21st Century](#), issued by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship.

WDC supports the passage of SB176. SB176 would require the State Board of Elections to extend the filing deadline for a primary election if, at any time during the 48-hour period immediately preceding the filing deadline, the number of candidates from a political party is less than the number of nominations the party is allowed for the office. This bill would remedy a situation that occurred in Montgomery County in the 2022 primary, in which the central committee selected a candidate for the primary ballot after one of the three delegate candidates dropped out within hours of the filing deadline. SB176 would place responsibility for filling such ballot vacancies firmly in the hands of the citizenry, where it belongs.

In spirit and substance, this bill would expand eligible individuals' opportunity to file for elected office. By extending the filing deadline by seven days under specific limited circumstances, SB176 would help ensure that any eligible candidate has the opportunity to file for an open seat in a primary election when an unopposed candidate dies, becomes disqualified, or withdraws; and when the number of filed candidates is less than the number of nominations the political party is allowed.

SB176 would make sure that every citizen – not only party insiders – would have an equal chance to run for office when a sudden opening occurs. The proposed seven-day extension of the filing deadline would advance democracy by allowing time for adequate and widespread public notice of a last-minute opening, thus creating opportunity for



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candidates who might consider running to do so, rather than having the ballot opening filled by the political party's central committee.

We ask for your support for SB176 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Respectfully,

Diana Conway
President

Fran Rothstein
Advancing Democracy in Maryland Committee

SB176_ Last-Minute Candidacy_ Fair Filing Testimon

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

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CHERYL C. KAGAN
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SB176: Last Minute Candidacy Fix/“Fair Filing”
Education, Energy, Environment (& Elections!) Committee
Thursday, February 16, 2023 1PM

In the final hours before the filing deadline for the 2022 Primary Election, an incumbent withdrew their candidacy for office and instead filed for another. Because no other candidate could get to Annapolis in time to file before the deadline, the County Central Committee ultimately selected the party’s nominee.

In 1998, another individual withdrew under similar circumstances and had already recruited a friend whom they hoped would succeed them in the House. These examples clearly reveal a loophole that ultimately precluded voters from having the chance to choose their nominee.

Last-minute Candidacy Fix/“Fair Filing” ([SB176](#)) would ensure that new leaders are **ELECTED (by voters)** rather than **SELECTED**. If a filed candidate dies or withdraws within 48 hours of the filing deadline, this deadline would be extended by seven days. An extension would give prospective candidates ample time to make a carefully considered decision to run and file their paperwork.

Waiting seven days would **not** be burdensome to election administrators. Using the preliminary 2022 schedule as a framework, the timeline would have been as follows:

- Filing Deadline (April 15, 2022 9pm)
- The County Democratic Central Committee picked a candidate to fill the vacancy on the primary ballot (April 20, 2022)
- **Proposed Filing Deadline if SB176 had been law (April 22, 2022)**
- Last day to remove a candidate’s name from the ballot due to the candidate’s death or disqualification (April 25, 2022)
- Deadline for SBE to display on its website the content and arrangement of each certified ballot (May 16, 2022)
- Primary Election Day (July 19, 2022)

SB176 would offer modest flexibility while being a minimal burden on our election administrators. Our democracy would benefit from this legislation.

I urge a favorable report on SB176.

230215-SB0176-ext-deadline-candidates.pdf

Uploaded by: Christine Hunt

Position: UNF

Christine Hunt and Jay Crouthers
1014 Dockser Drive
Crownsville, MD 21032

February 15, 2023

Maryland General Assembly
Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Annapolis, MD

RE: SB0176-Election Law-Insufficient Number of Candidates for a Primary Election

Dear Senators,

We oppose SB 176 and respectfully request that you vote against it.

We don't need new rules. If there aren't any candidates, then no one wants the job.

The State and County Central Committees need to plan their actions based on the existing deadline, not after.

Please vote against this bill.

Sincerely,

Christine Hunt and Jay Crouthers