

WDC - SB0366 Testimony-FINAL 2023.pdf

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**Senate Bill SB0366 – General Assembly Vacancy – Political Party Central Committees -
Procedures
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 women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC has formed an ad hoc committee, Advancing Democracy in Maryland, to examine and recommend actions that empower voters, achieve equality of voice and representation, and ensure the responsiveness of government institutions. We are guided by many of the recommendations of the report, [Our Common Purpose: Reinventing Democracy for the 21st Century](#), issued in 2020 by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship. The report endorsed 31 recommendations along with six strategies to "help the nation emerge as more resilient by 2026, the nation's 250th anniversary."

The ADM Committee will support legislative and executive branch directives that advance these aims. While we are all Democrats, we believe that advancing democracy is a non-partisan effort.

WDC urges the passage of SB0366. This bill is an essential vehicle for ensuring our democracy remains strong. It establishes requirements that ensure those who fill mid-term vacancies for Senator or Delegate in the General Assembly are selected fairly and impartially.

The bill requires that political party Central Committees make public all applications to fill a vacancy in the General Assembly, mandates public notice of the vacancy, requires the Central Committee to hold public meetings, and prohibits candidates who are also members of the Central Committee from voting for themselves. By creating these requirements, the bill allows all eligible voters to be aware of the selection process while ensuring that Central Committee members who apply for the vacancy do not have an advantage over non-Central Committee members by virtue of their vote. Central Committees are too small to allow such an advantage when a General Assembly vacancy needs to be filled.

By creating a transparent and unbiased process, SB0366 ensures that no individual or group can manipulate the outcome of the selection process. As a result, SB0366 is a critical bill that will increase public engagement in Central Committee processes, and greater engagement will lead to less biased processes. All Marylanders should support this legislation to keep our democracy strong and to ensure that our Central Committees hear from the people who will be represented by the legislator they choose.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to democracy!



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We ask for your support for SB0366 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Respectfully,

Diana Conway
President

Liza Smith
Advancing Democracy in Maryland Committee

2023-SB0366-VacancyAppointments-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Seth Grimes

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Senate Bill 366
FAVORABLE
General Assembly Vacancy - Political Party Central Committees – Procedures
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 15, 2023

Submitted by Seth Grimes, Montgomery County, Maryland

Chair Feldman and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Seth Grimes. I am a Montgomery County resident and a member of the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee, speaking only for myself.

I support SB 366 as a step to promote transparency, accountability, and fairness in the legislative-vacancy appointment process.

The bill ensures an adequate minimum application period, for candidates to step forward to apply for vacancy appointment.

It requires a central committee to take sensible steps to advertise vacancies and, by requiring translation into languages other than English based on local standards, promotes applications from currently under-represented populations.

The requirement that applications be posted online facilitates public participation in what is currently an insider process. That applications be available online for at least thirty days after a central-committee vote promotes nomination accountability, as does requiring that the nomination meetings be announced and open to the public with public disclosure of each member's vote.

Finally, the central-committee-member vote-recusal requirement advances appointment fairness.

SB 366 promotes transparency, accountability, and fairness in the vacancy-nomination process and beneficially creates uniformity across the state. I urge a favorable committee report and Senate floor vote.

Thank you.

Seth Grimes
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