



TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

SB 35 Maryland State Agency Transparency Act

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

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The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

The League has consistently supported Senator Kagan and Delegate Korman in their efforts to update and makes consistent the transparency requirements for more than twenty state government entities that make important fiscal and or policy decisions that have direct impact on the public interest. This year, upon passage of SB 35, the State Ethics Commission would now be required to be in compliance with the Open Meetings Act including offering live video streaming of each portion of a meeting held in open session. On their website they must maintain past meeting minutes for at least five years after the date of the meeting, and a complete and unedited archived video recording of the open portion of their meetings for at least one year after the date of the meeting.

We welcome this addition of sunshine to the actions of the State Ethics Commission which is responsible for the administration of public ethics law. Among their duties are enforcing disclosure requirements of the financial affairs of public officials, and setting standards of conduct for State and local government officials and employees. They have an important role in guarding against improper influence on public officials. In addition, the Commission reviews and approves county and municipal ethics laws enacted per the requirements of the Public Ethics Law.

We urge a favorable report on SB 35.