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Testimony on House Bill 498
Board of Public Works Public Comment Act
House Appropriations Committee

Position: Favorable

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of more than 1500 nonprofit organizations and institutions. We urge you to support House Bill 498, to improve transparency of, and public access to the important policy decision-making vested in the Maryland Board of Public Works.

The Board of Public Works (BPW) has a major oversight and governance role in state procurement and other contracting, that represents a significant portion of all public expenditures in Maryland. In addition, the BPW has the authority, on very short notice, to make critical budget reduction decisions in times of fiscal stress.

A 2016 requirement to provide a minimum of three business days' notice of proposed budget cuts or other agenda items going before the BPW was an improvement over the past policy. However, without a defined public comment process, it is still very challenging for interested Marylanders to provide input on measures going before the Board, or access other comments or submissions in the public record.

House Bill 498 would require the Board to create an online system for the public to easily submit comments via the BPW website and would require that submitted comments be published as part of the board packet. The bill also allows a reasonable timeline to create such a system and provides funding for a staff position to help facilitate the public comment process.

We urge you to give House Bill 498 a favorable report.



Maryland Nonprofits' mission is to strengthen organizations and networks for greater quality of life and equity.