



TESTIMONY TO THE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

HB 58 Maryland State Agency Transparency Act

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

DATE: February 15, 2023

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 Delegate Korman and Senator Kagan 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. Upon passage of HB 58, the State Ethics Commission would be added to the list of state entities 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 HB 58.