

**March 7, 2023****Testimony on HB 1093****Howard County – Board of Education – Terms and Public Campaign Financing Ho. Co. 14-23  
Ways and Means****Position:** Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of the section of HB 1093 which would authorize the governing body of Howard County to establish a system of public campaign financing for member of the Board of Education – we take no position on the alteration of terms of the Board’s members.

The Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 included language that allowed counties to create public campaign funding programs that would allow candidates for county council and county executive to run for office with the support of their communities. The Montgomery County Council quickly passed their own program by unanimous vote in 2014, successfully using the program during the 2018 election cycle. Since then, Howard County, Prince George’s County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County have established programs of their own.

During the 2022 election cycle, we saw the first use of Howard County’s program. And in Montgomery County where the program was used for a second time, we saw a diverse mixture of twenty incumbents and first-time candidates qualify for and opt into the program, with three of those candidates being successful in their bids for office.

These programs have been gaining popularity Maryland for a simple reason: particularly since the *Citizens United* decision, Americans across the political spectrum feel that our campaign system is disconnected from the populace, and that LLCs and wealthy individuals render regular Marylanders’ voices meaningless in the current campaign finance environment. Small dollar public funding programs, on the other hand, lift up regular Marylanders’ voices, and empower those with community-supported ideas who may not have connections to deep-pocketed interests.

Common Cause Maryland stands for the amplification of regular Marylanders’ voices in every election for every office, including local Boards of Education. For these reasons, we request a favorable report on HB 1093.