

March 27, 2024

Testimony on HB 331
Election Law – Candidate Expenditures – Campaign-Related Caregiving Expenses
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of HB 331. This legislation would expand the allowable uses of campaign funds to include reasonable expenses for childcare incurred by the candidate as a direct result of campaign activity.

As more parents of young children begin to run for elected office, we are thankfully seeing increased public awareness of the additional barriers they face to getting on the ballot. Like so many full-time jobs, campaigning is generally family unfriendly. The long and often unpredictable hours candidates keep in order to attend events, meet with constituents, and spread their message rarely match up with local school and childcare center schedules. Additionally, the exorbitant costs of running a competitive campaign - which depending on the office sought can run into the millions of dollars – can be debilitating to candidates from working families, especially when the average cost of childcare per child per year has reached upwards of \$10,000 across the U.S.

Finding quality childcare is expensive and difficult, putting an extra burden on low-income candidates and single parents, who statistically are more likely to be women. Political candidates often end up having to take a leave of absence or even quitting their jobs altogether in order for office, options that are not feasible for candidates that come from or support low-income or single parent families. The effect of this is that it is often wealthy white men who are more likely to run for and win positions in local, state, or federal offices – this in turn impacts the likelihood that we will see more policies that help women and children.

It is important to note that on the federal level, candidates have been able to use campaign funds for childcare expenses following a 2018 ruling by the Federal Election Commission. Since then, 30 states have passed legislation to codify this practice into law.¹

Normalizing childcare expenditures as part of a campaign is a critical step towards making elected office more inclusive and accessible for more people in diverse circumstances. For those reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report.

¹ <https://www.votemamafoundation.org/reports/cfcc2024>