



**Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association**

P.O. Box 26214 | Baltimore, MD 21210

443-768-3281 | [rsnyder@mddcpres.com](mailto:rsnyder@mddcpres.com)

[www.mddcpres.com](http://www.mddcpres.com)

To: House Health & Government Operations Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

Date: February 9, 2023

Re: **HB712 - SUPPORT**

The Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Press Association represents a diverse membership of news media organizations, from large metro dailies like the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun, to hometown newspapers such as The Annapolis Capital and the Frederick News Post to publications such as The Daily Record, the Baltimore Times, and online-only publications such as MoCo 360 and Baltimore Brew.

The Press Association is pleased to support HB 712, which tightens the trade secret exemption to the Public Information Act. Although the Public Information Act promotes a culture of transparency, too often, exemptions are used to obfuscate actions by government and those who conduct business with government.

The trade secret exemption is often overused and this bill takes an important step towards bringing more transparency to the process of Tax Increment Financing. As we have seen in Baltimore City and other areas, developers can access special financing and tax incentives, footed by taxpayers, without their knowledge or consent. These deals are often hidden under the exemptions of the Public Information Act. This bill would help to bring those tax incentive deals to light for public scrutiny.

Although the exemption is overused in our opinion, this bill does not strike it – rather, it requires a standard of “substantial competitive harm” to be met to shield the information.

We believe this legislation is an important step forward to will bring more transparency and openness to the development process. Too often, the public is left in the dark about the money behind development projects that affect their communities.

The Press Association urges a favorable report.



**We believe a strong news media is  
central to a strong and open society.**

Read local news from around the region at [www.mddcnews.com](http://www.mddcnews.com)

