

March 22, 2024

Testimony on SB 458
Campaign Finance – Political Organizations – Prohibitions and Disclosures
Ways and Means

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in strong support of SB 458, which increases transparency requirements for scam political action committees – also known as “scam PACs” – as well as empower the Maryland Comptroller and the State Board of Elections to fully investigate any future violations.

Scam PACs are entities that raise money, purportedly to help candidates win their campaigns. However, instead of spending those funds on the candidate, the PAC effectively pockets the money. This bill would increase transparency requirements around these scam PACs, making it more difficult for them to conceal money they have raised and mandating additional disclosures to potential donors about who and what the money is being used for. It also empowers the State Board of Elections to issue subpoenas, impose civil penalties, and prohibit offenders from raising any further money.

Without knowing the signs, it is too easy to mistake a scam PAC for a legitimate charity or political group. This legislation takes necessary steps to protect Marylanders and provides tools for the relevant bodies to investigate and prevent wrongdoing.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 458.