

Testimony of Edward Fischman  
(Chair – Montgomery County chapter of Our Revolution Maryland)

Testimony in Support of HB 479

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkins, and the Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I offer this testimony in support of the bill, HB 479, and thank Delegate Palakovich Carr, for bringing this question before the House, along with the cross-filed bill led by Senator Feldman.

Beginning after my selection as a delegate to the 2016 Democratic National Convention, I became involved in local state politics as a founding steering committee member of Our Revolution Maryland. Over the next 2 years, I got to know Ben Jealous well, and eventually also his very impressive running mate, Susan Turnbull. I witnessed the manner in which other candidates selected their running mates, and also paid close attention to this dynamic in 2022.

The realization which crystallized for me, is that, with rare exceptions like Larry Hogan's choice in 2014, the primary candidates for Governor will select their running mates with an eye – or both eyes – focused towards winning the primary. That seems inevitable for the candidates in competitive primaries, but it is a very short-sighted concern.

From the perspective of political parties, it would be better to have the best possible running mate for the general election, but that is almost a logistical impossibility. In any primary there may be multiple running mates, perhaps a half dozen or more. They can't all be 'the best.'

Moreover, the requirement to have a running mate in place by the primary filing deadline works to dissuade members of this Assembly from joining a ticket. Members would not only have to forego reelection, but they would also have to resign their seats so they could raise money for their own campaign committee. All that, while their future depends on the success of the 'top of the ticket' candidate. We do get some good running mates, but they invariably lack the government experience most would hope for in a potential future Governor.

The change proposed here wouldn't prevent a candidate from announcing a running mate during the primary campaign, but it would allow them to wait. We might expect to see leaders in the General Assembly selected, or even the primary winner choosing one of his competitors.

This is how the process works at the federal level, and in significant number of states. It seems the best way for a candidate to choose a running mate. For the voters, we can expect a running mate well-prepared to succeed to the office.

I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB479.