



P.O. Box 278  
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**Committee:** Ways and Means  
**Testimony on:** HB 1356 Candidates for Village Board or Columbia Council in a Village of Columbia – Reports of Donations and Disbursements Ho. Co. 10–24  
**Position:** Favorable  
**Hearing Date:** February 27, 2024

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB 1356. The bill requires each village community association within the Columbia Association to receive reports of campaign contributions and expenses from candidates for Village Board or Columbia Council and provides that the reports must be made available to the public.

While Columbia is the second largest community in Maryland after Baltimore City, Columbia is not organized as a municipality but is managed by the Columbia Association, a nonprofit community services association. Because of that unique status, current state campaign finance and disclosure laws do not apply to elections for positions within the Columbia Association.

The Sierra Club and its members care about both the natural and human environments, including promoting racial and social equity. As a grassroots organization, we support making political campaign contribution information public so voters can make informed decisions and take into account the sources of financial support each candidate is receiving.

This bill would provide voters within the Columbia Association transparency on campaign finances similar to the transparency available to voters in Maryland's state and county elections.

For those reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 1356.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.