

March 5, 2024

**Testimony on HB 1352
Howard County – Public Campaign Financing – Board of Education Ho. Co. 1-24
Ways and Means**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of HB 1352, which would give the Howard County Council the authority to establish a system of public campaign financing for use by candidates for the county board of education.

The Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 included language that allowed counties to create public campaign funding programs that would allow candidates for county council and county executive to run for office with the support of their communities. The Montgomery County Council quickly passed their own program by unanimous vote in 2014, successfully using the program during the 2018 election cycle. Since then, Howard County, Anne Arundel County, Prince George's County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County have established programs of their own.

These programs have been gaining popularity in Maryland for a simple reason: particularly since the *Citizens United* decision, Americans across the political spectrum feel that our campaign system is disconnected from the populace, and that LLCs and wealthy individuals render regular Marylanders' voices meaningless in the current campaign finance environment. Small dollar public funding programs, on the other hand, uplift the voices of regular Marylanders and empower those with community-supported ideas who may not have connections to deep-pocketed interests.

While CFRA allows counties to address this problem for county council candidates, the problem exists at every level from Governor on down. Common Cause Maryland supports amplifying the voices of regular Americans in every election for every office. For these reasons, we request a favorable report on HB 1352 to authorize Howard County to expand their public funding program to the county school board at their discretion.