



TESTIMONY FOR SB0171

General Assembly Vacancy – Political Party Central Committees - Procedures

Bill Sponsor: Senator Lam

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0171 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The Central Committees of the Democratic and Republican parties play an outsize role in nominating individuals for legislative positions in the General Assembly whenever there is a vacancy. Due to past vacancies, there are a considerable number of Delegates and Senators who have essentially been elected by the Central Committee rather than by their constituents.

The process of nominating a candidate for the Governor to fill a vacant position is not a particularly transparent one. This bill seeks to remedy that problem by requiring that the Central Committee provide public notice that they are accepting applications and that they hold the application period open for at least 7 days. They must also publicly advertise any meetings that they will have on the vacancy and post any applications online. Their meetings on the vacancy must be open to the public. Finally, any member of the Central Committee that has applied for the vacancy must abstain from voting. This is just how a democratic process should work.

Nominees for legislative positions should not be voted on behind closed doors. This process directly affects the constituents of the district that the vacancy is in, and they should be able to see and participate in that process.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee