

**Edward Fischman - Testimony in Support of SB 171 --**  
(Chair, Montgomery County chapter of Our Revolution MD)

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee:

I offer this testimony in support of bill, SB 171 and thank Senator Lam for his steadfast resolve in once again bringing this question before the Senate.

I am testifying on behalf of Our Revolution Maryland which has been advocating for various reforms to our election and appointment rules to democratize rules which too often work to entrench and reinforce the influence of those in positions of power. In connection with this interest, members of our organization have stood for election or appointment to the county Democratic Central Committees, as well as the General Assembly, in hopes of advancing some important reforms. I was elected to the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee in 2022. I have sought to promote the very reform which is the subject of HB 237. I speak for myself, not the MCDCC or its members, but I think my experience in the vacancy process may be instructive.

Members of central committees can certainly benefit from the current rules which allow them to vote for themselves in a vacancy appointment, but I believe it is undemocratic, unseemly, and counterproductive to the interests of the parties themselves. Several of my colleagues on the Montgomery Central Committee joined me in efforts to implement our own reform, but facing resistance from the state party, our reform proposal failed to secure a majority vote. Even still, by voicing our concerns, we influenced our members to voluntarily recuse from voting on a vacancy if they have applied to fill that vacancy.

Advocates for the current system earnestly maintain that prohibiting their participation in the process would somehow deprive the interested member of some essential right to vote. That fundamentally misunderstands how this is different from ANY other election.

Being able to vote on the vacancy recommendation, members are uniquely positioned in comparison to other applicants. It is indisputably a massive advantage if they get to cast one of a very small number of votes on their own behalf. It should be obvious to all that this is problematic. Rather than infringing on one person's democratic rights, the proposed reform makes for a fairer, more democratic process for all applicants.

Given that central committees are only empowered to fill vacancies through the Constitution, it is appropriate for the Assembly and the people, to define circumstances and rules for exercising that authority.

I believe reform is in the best interests of the political parties. Central committee members should be focused on party-building. In my opinion, the current system creates an incentive which may entice candidates to run for the committee for reasons other than party-building. The change proposed in SB 171 only a small tweak there, but I believe it will boost the public's perception of the process and the integrity of the central committees.

On my own behalf, and on behalf of thousands of Our Revolution members in Maryland, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 171.