



**Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association**

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To: Health & Government Operations Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

Date: March 28, 2025

Re: **OPPOSE SB555**

The Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Press Association represents a diverse membership of news media organizations, from large metro dailies like the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun, to hometown newspapers such as The Annapolis Capital and the Maryland Gazette to publications such as The Daily Record, the Baltimore Times, and online-only publications such as Maryland Matters and Baltimore Brew.

The Press Association, continues to oppose SB 555 as written, which creates a troubling precedent of allowing custodians to deny access to public records if those records are part of "reasonably anticipated litigation." The Public Information Act has a stated policy in favor of public access, and this is a concerning action.

There are numerous exemptions to disclosure under the Public Information Act. As the [PIA Manual, Chapter 3](#) opening paragraph says, "Given the PIA's policy in favor of public access and the requirement that the PIA generally "be construed in favor of permitting inspection of a record," these exceptions should be construed narrowly, unless an "unwarranted invasion" of personal privacy would result." If the committee feels very strongly that a bill is necessary, we urge the committee to narrow the legislation further, in the following manner:

On page 1, line 17, after circumstances, insert "**PROVIDED THAT SUCH EVIDENCE SHALL NOT INCLUDE THE REQUEST FOR THE RECORD ITSELF.**"

The stakes are high. The proponent seeks to put the government on the "same footing" as private litigants, but the government is not on the same footing. It has far broader responsibility for public accountability and transparency in support of democracy, as codified in the PIA.

We urge an unfavorable report, unless this amendment is adopted.