

Oppose HB 821

Health and Government Operations Committee

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and members of the committee,

I strongly oppose HB821, which seeks to amend the Public Information Act in Maryland. As stated in the bill, the proposed legislation would allow the government to deny inspection of records related to pending or reasonably anticipated litigation, citing the need to protect the interests of the state or its agencies. However, this reasoning is flawed. The government's actions should be transparent to all citizens, not just those with a vested interest in the outcome.

The Public Information Act is a cornerstone of Maryland's transparency laws, providing citizens with access to government records and information. By making it easier for the government to dismiss or ignore requests the bill would effectively erode this right. We believe that the government should operate transparently to all citizens, not just those who can navigate the complexities of the law.

The bill's provisions would create a chilling effect on public access to information, discouraging citizens from exercising their right to request information. This would be particularly damaging for marginalized communities, who often rely on access to information to hold their government accountable. By making it harder for citizens to access information, HB821 would perpetuate a system of secrecy and exclusivity that is antithetical to democratic values.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to oppose HB821 in its current form. Instead, I suggest that you work to strengthen the Public Information Act, making it easier for citizens to access information and hold their government accountable. Transparency is a fundamental right that should be protected and promoted, not undermined.

Sincerely,
Mark Meyerovich
Gaithersburg, MD