



TESTIMONY FOR HB0174
General Assembly - Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Foley

Committee: Ways and Means

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB0174 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.

Our members would like to ensure, as much as possible, that *their* vote for candidates for the General Assembly is what elects its members. We understand that events happen that cause a duly elected member of the General Assembly to vacate their seat between election cycles. If a seat is vacated early in the term, the constituents of that district should be able to re-elect a new representative.

This bill would require the Governor to call a special election for a vacancy in the legislature as long as the vacancy does not occur within an election year. The special election (both primary and general election) would be carried out by mail and the dates of the special election would coincide with the normal dates of primary and general elections. If the vacancy occurs in an election year, within 55 days of the date that candidates certify candidacy, the appointee would serve out the remainder of the term. We believe that this will ensure that the replacement member will only serve out the term if it is too late to announce candidacy for the next Primary or General election.

Overall, this bill will give the constituents of Maryland more of a voice in electing their representatives, which is what is supposed to happen in a democratic society.

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