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HB550: Local Public Campaign Financing - Expansion to Additional Offices

Tuesday, February 4, 2025

Ways and Means

FAVORABLE

Maryland PIRG is a state based, small donor funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state. We work to find common ground around common sense solutions that will help ensure a healthier, safer, more secure future

We support HB550 to enable counties and the City of Baltimore to establish public campaign financing programs for additional offices, including State's Attorney, sheriff, register of wills, judge and clerk of the Circuit Court, judge of the Orphans' Court or an elected member of the County Board of Education after the jurisdiction has implemented a system of small donor public campaign financing for elective offices in the executive or legislative branches of government for at least one complete election cycle.

Ten years ago, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 which made it possible for Maryland counties and Baltimore City to build small donor campaign finance programs. Since, Montgomery County, Howard County, Prince George's County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County have all established these new campaign finance systems, and Montgomery County and Howard County have run elections using the new system.

These types of programs are popular, effective, and gaining momentum. Maryland PIRG Foundation's reports from [2019](#) and [2023](#) documented the success of the programs in Howard and Montgomery Counties. . Now, it is time to let jurisdictions who have tried and tested their programs to expand them to include additional offices.

Small donor campaign financing programs allow candidates to run for office with small donations from their constituents and remain competitive with those who accept large and corporate contributions. This serves the dual purpose of reducing corporate and large donor campaign spending and re-engaging the community in the electoral process.

This program also aims to expand opportunities to run for office, so candidates of all backgrounds can run based on the strength of their ideas—not access to money. This is particularly important for the offices included in this bill. Expanding public campaign financing programs will be better for candidates and elected officials, better for the public, and better for Maryland.

We request a favorable report.

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