



## **TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

### **HB 550 Local Public Campaign Financing – Expansion to Additional Offices**

#### **POSITION – Support**

**BY: LINDA KOHN**

**DATE: February 4, 2025**

The League of Women Voters supports methods of financing political campaigns that:

- Enhance political equality for all citizens;
- Ensure maximum participation by citizens in the political process;
- Protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns;
- Enable candidates to compete equitably for public office;
- Ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public; and
- Combat corruption and undue influence in government.

The legislation before you would offer counties the option to expand public financing to State's Attorney, Sheriff, Register of Wills, Judge of the Circuit Court, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Judge of the Orphan's Court and an elected member of the County Board of Education.

Allowing local governments to voluntarily implement public campaign finance programs for local elected offices is one way to achieve the goals listed above. Thanks to legislation previously passed by the Maryland General Assembly, counties may establish their own system of public campaign financing for County Executive and County Council candidates. Experience has shown that it has been effective in encouraging a larger and more diverse pool of candidates. Public financing is especially helpful for those running for office for the first time who often have a harder time raising money than incumbents and well connected traditionally-financed candidates.

**We urge a favorable report on HB 550.**