

**January 17, 2025**

**Testimony on HB 111**  
**Election Law – Campaign Finance – Exploratory Committees**  
**Ways & Means**

**Position:** Favorable with Amendments

Common Cause Maryland is in support of HB 111, which would apply certain campaign finance requirements and prohibitions to draft committees and exploratory committees.

Maryland has a well-developed system of campaign finance law, a system that ensures everyday citizens are able trace who is making donations and what special interest voices are being heard within the election process. Given the amount of money that can be spent testing the feasibility of an individual’s candidacy, we believe that exploratory committees should be required to adhere to the same level of scrutiny - it is critical that citizens be able to see who is funding these efforts.

We would like to offer two friendly amendments to the bill:

Part C as written says that an individual who has already declared their candidacy for office may create an exploratory committee for another public office. We believe that this should not be the case – exploratory committees are meant to “explore” a potential candidacy, meaning you should not be able to create a new exploratory committee when you have already declared your intent to run for office. Part C should be amended to make it clear that only an individual who has not yet declared their candidacy is able to set up an exploratory committee.

Part E should be amended to stress that all expense functions should be about researching the candidate’s viability. For example, if staff are hired using disbursement funds, it should be made very clear that they are being hired on a temporary basis solely for the purpose of determining the potential candidate’s viability for a public office.

Overall, this legislation will allow for greater disclosure and transparency around these committees, giving the public the opportunity to see who is spending time and money to influence our elections. For these reasons, we hope that the committee considers our friendly amendments and request a favorable report on HB 111.