



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

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Foley  
**Committee:** Ways and Means  
**Organization Submitting:** Shore Progress  
**Person Submitting:** Jared Schablein, Chair  
**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0174 on behalf of Shore Progress. Shore Progress (formerly LSPC) is a nonpartisan civic organization covering the Eastern Shore of Maryland. We are committed to building strong communities across the Eastern Shore by building the Progressive movement.

This bill proposes a constitutional amendment requiring a special election to fill vacancies in the Maryland General Assembly at the same time as regular statewide primary and general elections, provided the vacancy occurs on or before a specific deadline. We strongly support this measure as a necessary step to enhance representation and maintain the integrity of the democratic process. Why We Support This Bill:

**Overwhelming Reliance on Appointments:** An overwhelming number of vacancies in the General Assembly have historically been filled through appointments rather than elections, depriving voters of their fundamental right to choose their representatives. This trend risks undermining public trust in the democratic process. By requiring special elections, this bill ensures that voters, not political insiders, have the final say in determining who represents them.

**Ensuring Democratic Representation:** Vacancies in the Maryland General Assembly leave communities without full representation during critical legislative periods. By aligning special elections with the regular statewide election cycle, this bill guarantees that voters can select their representatives promptly and fairly.

**Transparent and Predictable Process:** The bill establishes a clear timeline for when special elections are required, based on the date of the vacancy. This provides transparency and consistency for voters, candidates, and election officials, reducing uncertainty in the process.

**Strengthening Voter Engagement:** Aligning special elections with regular statewide elections is likely to result in higher voter turnout than standalone special elections. This ensures that a broader and more representative population participates in selecting their General Assembly members.

**Safeguarding Accountability:** Ensuring that vacancies are filled through elections rather than prolonged appointments strengthens accountability by giving voters the power to choose their representatives directly.

As an organization committed to promoting fair and inclusive governance, Shore Progress views this bill as a critical step toward ensuring that all Marylanders are fully and fairly represented in their state legislature. We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.