SEIU Local 500 Testimony in Support of SB 11 2026.

Uploaded by: Christopher Cano

Position: FAV

Testimony - SB 11, Public Financing Act – Fair Campaign Financing Fund – Distributions
Favorable
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 11, 2026
Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Feldman & Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents over 20,000 public sector and nonprofit workers across Maryland, including educators, public employees, and community service workers who believe deeply in a democratic system that is fair, accessible, and accountable to working people—not wealthy special interests.

Senate Bill 11 makes a straightforward but important improvement to Maryland's public financing system by allowing distributions from the Fair Campaign Financing Fund to begin on July 1 of the year before an election, rather than January. This modest change will significantly strengthen the effectiveness of Maryland's public financing program.

Publicly financed candidates—many of whom run on platforms centered on workers' rights, strong public services, and racial and economic justice—often face structural disadvantages compared to traditionally financed candidates. Delaying access to public funds until January compresses campaign timelines, limits early voter outreach, and undermines the ability of grassroots candidates to build viable, competitive campaigns.

By allowing earlier access to funds, SB 11:

- Levels the playing field between publicly financed candidates and those backed by wealthy donors;

- Encourages more working-class and community-rooted candidates to run for office;

- Strengthens Maryland's commitment to reducing the influence of big money in politics; and

- Enhances voter engagement by supporting robust, competitive elections earlier in the cycle.

For SEIU Local 500 members, democracy is not an abstract concept—it shapes decisions about wages, staffing levels, school funding, healthcare access, and the quality of public services our communities rely on every day. A strong public financing system helps ensure that elected officials are accountable to voters and workers, not special interests.

SB 11 preserves the integrity of the Fair Campaign Financing Fund while making it more functional and fair. We believe this bill aligns squarely with Maryland's values and with the General Assembly's longstanding commitment to expanding democratic participation.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 11.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs
SEIU Local 500

SBE Testimony SB 11.pdf
Uploaded by: Jared DeMarinis
Position: FAV

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SB 11 - Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee (By Request – Departmental – State Board of Elections)

Public Financing Act – Fair Campaign Financing Fund – Distributions

Purposes:
- Align Fair Campaign Financing Fund distribution dates for Gubernatorial candidates with distribution dates for public financing programs for county candidates;
- Enhance the feasibility and benefits of participating in the Fair Campaign Financing Fund program for Gubernatorial candidates

Comments:
The State Board of Elections supports this legislation.

This bill aligns distribution of public funds for certified and qualified candidates in both local and State public financing programs, allowing qualifying Gubernatorial campaigns to receive public financing distributions beginning on July 1 of the year before a Gubernatorial election. At present, Gubernatorial campaigns can begin receiving distributions in January of the election year. The bill would not change eligibility for the program, nor the period during which candidates could collect donations eligible for matching.

Established in 1974, the Fair Campaign Financing Fund is a voluntary public financing system for candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Updated and amended in 2021, with the Fair Elections Act of 2021, the program allows candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor to receive public funds for their campaign if they can show that they have raised a certain amount of funds from a certain number of donors. Under State law, a gubernatorial ticket must raise at least $120,000 from 1,500 eligible contributions in order to qualify. The current public financing program is modeled after county public financing programs.

While public financing programs permit gubernatorial and county campaigns alike to begin raising private contributions to qualify for public matching funds when the election cycle starts, Gubernatorial candidates currently have to wait up to six months longer than local campaigns to begin receiving distributions. The delay in access to public funding for Gubernatorial candidates could have a potential negative impact on participation in the program.

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JARED DeMARINIS, STATE ADMINISTRATOR EEE 2/11/2026
STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Testimony in support of SB0011 - Public Financing

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0011_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

02/11/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703-7134

TESTIMONY ON SB#0011 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Public Financing Act – Fair Campaign Financing Fund – Distributions

TO: Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget & Taxation Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0011, **Public Financing Act – Fair Campaign Financing Fund – Distributions**

This bill simply attempts to distribute public election funding of candidates to an earlier date in the candidacy process.

> Like any campaign finance regulation, public financing programs have pros and cons. Proponents of public campaign financing often argue that these systems encourage small-dollar donors to participate in elections, amplifying the voices of average Americans and countering the influence of PACs and other large spenders. Supporters also maintain that, by footing all or part of the bill, public financing can enable individuals to run for office who otherwise could not afford to. Among other things, opponents often argue that public financing programs force taxpayers to support candidates they otherwise would not by providing state funds to all political campaigns. Some also suggest that small-dollar donations like those encouraged by public funding programs amplify the voices of members of the public with extreme opinions on both sides of the aisle, fueling political polarization. [1]

My personal view is that earlier distribution can make it much more possible for people who, due to lack of funding, may not enter the race. This bill can make the decision to run possible for a wider circle of prospective candidates which in turn promotes healthy debates among candidates on platforms and issues relevant to voters in specific offices. I therefore think this bill, providing earlier funding, opens the elections processes to more individuals and supports our democracy in Maryland.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0011.

[1] https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/public-financing-of-campaigns-overview