

SB 144 MDDC Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Rebecca Snyder

Position: FAV



Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association

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To: Senate Energy, Education & the Environment Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

Date: February 9, 2026

Re: **SUPPORT SB 144**

The Maryland-Delaware-DC Press Association (MDDC) represents a diverse membership of news media organizations. Our membership includes large metro dailies such as *The Washington Post* and *The Baltimore Sun*, hometown newspapers such as *The Star Democrat* and *Dorchester Star*, specialty publications such as *The Daily Record* and *Baltimore Jewish Times*, and leading online news organizations such as *Baltimore Banner*, *Maryland Matters*, and *Baltimore Brew*. Our membership spans both for-profit and nonprofit models and reflects the full ecosystem of local journalism that Marylanders depend on every day. Our members rely on public records to inform Marylanders about how government power is exercised.

The Press Association supports SB 144, which reclassifies the records relating to an administrative or criminal investigation of misconduct by an elected official or a person appointed to fill an elected office. Allowing public access to the closed records of the State Ethics board allows the public more visibility into the patterns of behavior of public officials. The State of Maryland provides this level of access to police personnel records and this bill normalizes that access to public officials, which hold a large degree of public trust.

The public has a right to know the actions of public officials in office and the outcome of misconduct investigations. This transparency builds trust in government and helps create meaningful steps to open government.

We urge a favorable report.



We believe a strong news media is central to a strong and open society.

Testimony in support of SB0144 - Public Informatio

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0144 RichardKaplowitz_FAV

02/11/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#/0144- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Public Information Act - Personnel Records of Elected Officials and Joint Ethics Committee Records

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0144, **Public Information Act - Personnel Records of Elected Officials and Joint Ethics Committee Records**

Politico has declared that *Election officials grapple with a brain drain as threats rise - Two new reports portend a potentially bleak future for an American democracy that counts on its engaged citizenry to do everything from count votes to make laws.*¹

Increasingly violent threats toward and harassment of public officials — from county clerks up to the president — are driving more and more of those figures out of their jobs, a particular concern among local election officials, who have struggled with attrition for years.

In recognition of the problem from increasing political polarization creating a threat to our public officials from unhinged individuals and groups this bill is being submitted. Maryland can commit to protection of those who serve the public by shielding their personally identifiable information.

This bill will establish that certain records of elected officials are not personnel records for the purposes of inspection under the Public Information Act; and establishing that certain records of the State Ethics Commission and Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics are available for public inspection under certain circumstances.

It will not protect those who abuse public trust by unethical conduct in every case but will protect our other public servants providing more peace of mind that doing their jobs is not opening themselves and their families to possible harm.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0144.

¹ <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/02/03/election-officials-threat-midterms-00761210>

2026 Testimony -- MDCD Broadcasters Association --

Uploaded by: Timothy Nelson

Position: FAV



To: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

From: Tim Nelson, Counsel to the Maryland-DC-Delaware Broadcasters Association

Date: Submitted - February 9, 2026; Hearing - February 11, 2026

Re: Senate Bill 144

The Maryland-DC-Delaware Broadcasters Association (“MDCD” or the “Association”) appreciates the opportunity to submit this written testimony regarding Senate Bill 144, “Public Information Act - Personnel Records of Elected Officials and Joint Ethics Committee Records,” which legislation would expand the scope of public inspection of records pertaining to investigations of misconduct by public and/or election officials and matters before the State Ethics Commission and the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics. On behalf of the Association and its Members, which include approximately 20 television stations and 110 radio stations, MDCD urges a favorable report of Senate Bill 144.

The Maryland-DC-Delaware Broadcasters Association is a voluntary, non-profit trade association that advocates for the interests of its member radio and television stations and, more generally, the interests of broadcasting in Maryland, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. One of the central, critical roles the MDCD’s member stations perform is to inform the public about the actions of Maryland’s public bodies, figures, and officials. As the United States Supreme Court has recognized, “[b]eyond question, the role of the media is important; acting as the ‘eyes and ears’ of the public[.]”¹

As such, MDCD has long advocated for transparency in government and measures that seek to expand rights of this State’s citizens to access public records, including records created by and/or relating to any government agency, legislative body, or political representative, regardless of political affiliation or point of view. Senate Bill 144 would increase transparency in government to the benefit of all Marylanders by (1) establishing that certain records of the State Ethics Commission and the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics are subject to public inspection under the Public Ethics Law, and (2) potentially making available for public inspection certain records pertaining to investigations of misconduct by certain public officials (including elected officials).

The Maryland-DC-Delaware Broadcasters Association appreciates Senator Folden’s leadership on this issue and urges a favorable report of Senate Bill 144.

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¹ *Houchins v. KQED, Inc.*, 438 U.S. 1, 8 (1978).

SB 144 - State Ethics Commission - Informational O

Uploaded by: Kate Thompson

Position: INFO



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February 11, 2026

Senate Bill 144 – Public Information Act – Personnel Records of Elected Officials and Joint Ethics Committee Records

Testimony Before the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The State Ethics Commission provides this informational written testimony to explain the impact of this proposed legislation as set forth in the agency's fiscal note submitted on this bill. There will be several operational impacts on the State Ethics Commission from this proposed legislation. The State Ethics Commission would have to change existing training programs for State employees/officials and lobbyists, complaint and enforcement forms, enforcement procedures, informational materials, and website information to reflect the changes to confidentiality of complaint enforcement matters in the proposed legislation. The State Ethics Commission would also have to change existing enforcement regulations. In addition, the Commission would have to change existing local government regulations to include the changes from the proposed legislation in its regulations and Model Laws for local governments to consider including in local ethics laws. The anticipated fiscal impact would be approximately \$50,000 for necessary changes to programming and electronic training programs for State employees, State officials and lobbyists. This work is completed by outside vendors.

Senate Bill 144 seeks to change the confidentiality provisions of the Public Ethics Law in an impactful way. This legislation will remove any confidentiality restrictions for information related to a complaint investigated by the State Ethics Commission, whether or not that investigation concluded with a finding of a violation of a provision of the Maryland Public Ethics Law. Currently, in instances where the State Ethics Commission does issue a complaint, investigates the complaint, and makes a finding of a violation after holding a hearing, the State Ethics Commission issues a finding of facts and conclusions of law with respect to the violations. Information related to findings of a violation of the Public Ethics Law are not confidential and are posted on the State Ethics Commission's website. Settlement agreements in which an individual admits to a violation of a provision of the Public Ethics Law are also public and posted on the State Ethics Commission's website. The proposed legislation will remove confidentiality restrictions for complaints filed with and investigated by the State Ethics Commission that do not result in a finding of a violation. The proposed legislation, as drafted, will impact all individuals over which the State Ethics Commission has conflict of interest enforcement jurisdiction including State employees, public officials who are members of State Boards and Commissions, State elected officials of the Executive Branch and registered lobbyists.

sb144.pdf

Uploaded by: Will Vormelker

Position: INFO

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MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
410-260-1523
RE: Senate Bill 144
Public Information Act – Personnel Records of Elected Officials
and Joint Ethics Committee Records
DATE: February 4, 2026
(2/11)
INFORMATIONAL COMMENT PAPER

The Judiciary respects the separation of powers doctrine and acknowledges the policy-making authority of the legislative branch. As such, the Judiciary has no position on the policy aims of this legislation.

The Judiciary has concerns with the language, however, as it applies to judges and allows access to any records relating to an **investigation** of misconduct. The Judiciary would respectfully request that language be added to the provisions to provide that there must have been wrongdoing or misconduct found to allow access to such records.

The Judiciary has its own ethical body which maintains public confidence in the integrity, independence and impartiality of judges. The Maryland Judicial Disabilities Commission, rather than the State Ethics Committee, addresses complaints filed against judges which allege sanctionable conduct, disability or impairment. Judges can be subject to frivolous complaints filed with the Judicial Disabilities Commission for reasons none other than they may have ruled against the filer in their civil or criminal case. For that reason, Maryland rules have established comprehensive provisions which maintain that investigatory information is confidential – See Rules 16-903, 16-912 and 18-407.

The Judiciary is happy to work with Sponsor on language to address these concerns.

cc. Hon. William Folden
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor