

HB0333_General_Assembly_Vacancies_Central_Committe

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR HB0333

General Assembly Vacancy – Political Party Central Committees - Procedures

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Palakovich-Carr
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair
Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0333 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The Central Committees of the Democratic and Republican parties play an outsize role in nominating individuals for legislative positions in the General Assembly whenever there is a vacancy. Due to past vacancies, there are a considerable number of Delegates and Senators who have essentially been elected by the Central Committee rather than by their constituents.

The process of nominating a candidate for the Governor to fill a vacant position is not a particularly transparent one. This bill seeks to remedy that problem by requiring that the Central Committee provide public notice that they are accepting applications and that they hold the application period open for at least 7 days. They must also publicly advertise any meetings that they will have on the vacancy and post any applications online. Their meetings on the vacancy must be open to the public. Finally, any member of the Central Committee that has applied for the vacancy must abstain from voting. This is just how a democratic process should work.

Nominees for legislative positions should not be voted on behind closed doors. This process directly affects the constituents of the district that the vacancy is in, and they should be able to see and participate in that process.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee

HB 333 Testimony - March 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Christine Lemyze

Position: FAV

IndivisibleHoCoMD



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

HB 333: General Assembly Vacancy - Political Party Central Committee - Procedures

POSITION: Favorable

by: Christine Lemyze, Defend Democracy Team Lead, Indivisible Howard County

Date: March 25, 2026

On behalf of our 1800+ Indivisible Howard County members, I am writing in support of HB 333. IndivisibleHoCoMD is an informal group of citizens in Howard County, MD, registered with the Indivisible Project's national network of local grassroots groups. We believe in fairness, tolerance, inclusion, and democracy.

This bi-partisan bill, which has passed in the House twice in recent years, will modify the current appointment process to fill vacancies in the Maryland Legislative Assembly to ensure transparency and public inclusion, just as the election process does.

It will restore public trust in our democratic processes. It is a needed complement to SB 5/HB 50 which we hope will also pass.

Indivisible Howard County, representing 1800+ citizens in Maryland, urges a favorable report on HB 333.

HB53 IDA testimony (2).pdf

Uploaded by: Courtney Scott

Position: FAV



January 30, 2026

Re: HB53
End private ownership of zebras and macropods in Maryland

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of In Defense of Animals, an international animal rights organization, I am writing in support of HB53, which expands the list of dangerous wild animals prohibited from being held by private owners in Maryland. Maryland's exemplary law already prohibits private ownership of big cats, bears, some venomous snakes, and nonhuman primates. It is now critical to include zebras, wallabies, and kangaroos, and wallaroos to protect both the animals and the public. There is a history of zebras and kangaroos attacking their owners, and even children who visit the private facilities, resulting in serious injury and even death. These are large, muscular animals that have often escaped their enclosures, risking more danger to the general public

These animals suffer greatly from the conditions of their captivity, which include poor nutrition, injury and vulnerability to contagious diseases. And like all wild animals, they require vastly more space than small, private facilities can provide. Baby kangaroos stay with their mothers until 1 and a half years old. When they are removed from their mother at a younger age, they endure trauma that lasts a lifetime.

I urge you to pass HB53, making the current prohibition on private ownership of wild, dangerous animals more robust and inclusive and offering more protection for the animals and the citizens of Maryland.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Courtney Scott
Elephant Consultant
In Defense of Animals (IDA)
503-288-6142

HB 333 - Spiegel - Favorable - Senate.pdf

Uploaded by: Jayson Spiegel

Position: FAV

JAYSON L. SPIEGEL
413 Upshire Circle
Gaithersburg, MD 20878
Jayson_spiegel@yahoo.com
(301) 525-1418

March 25, 2026

Honorable Brian Feldman
Honorable Cheryl Kagan
Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee 2
West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **Request for Favorable Report HB0333**, General Assembly Vacancy – Political Party Central Committees – Procedures

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

I urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB0333. I am providing this testimony in my personal capacity as a Maryland resident (District 17). Although I am a member of the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee (MCDCC), the opinions expressed herein do not reflect the opinions of other Central Committee members; they are mine alone.

Elections are the cornerstone of a democracy which in turn is the source of our freedom as Americans. Vacancies in office are inevitable, especially during the transition from one party holding the Governorship to another party. Maryland is not unique in that regard. Members of Congress often resign to accept positions in the administration of a new President.

The issue of Central Committee appointment to fill legislative vacancies is so prominent that two of the three questions the League of Women Voters asked candidates for the Montgomery Central Committee to answer concerned elections and the Central Committee appointment process.

As a member of the MCDCC, I participated in the process of selecting nominees to fill legislative vacancies. I can personally attest to the fact that my colleagues took the responsibility seriously and invested significant time in getting to know the applicants. While the Central Committee selected outstanding public servants to fill vacancies in the General Assembly over the past year, our democratic ideals and desire to empower citizens dictate replacement of the appointment system with special elections.

Many of the reforms contained in HB0333 have already been adopted by the MCDCC. These include widespread dissemination of the vacancy announcement and process for

applying; public meetings, district-level candidate forums, letters of support from district residents, public MCDCC votes, etc. The MCDCC should be recognized for taking these positive steps.

The MCDCC posts applicant materials on its website with applicant contact information redacted. Posting applications enables the public to get to know the applicants and increases public confidence that the process is open and not an insider game.

However, members of the Central Committee who apply to fill legislative vacancies are not required to recuse themselves from voting on filling the vacancy. The proper and honorable thing to do would be for members to recuse themselves, but it is not required. Memorializing recusal in law would increase public confidence in the appointment process and represent a positive reform.

A major argument raised in opposition to recusal is easily rebutted. It is true that candidates in an election can vote for themselves. All candidates who are on the ballot can vote for themselves. However, the only candidate who can vote on legislative appointments is the Central Committee member. That is not right.

I support legislation to provide for elections to fill legislative vacancies. Even if the Constitution is amended to provide for elections, the reforms contained in HB0333 are still necessary to govern the initial appointment by the Central Committee.

I want to thank Delegate Palakovich Carr and Delegate Griffith for their leadership on this issue and urge the Committee to favorably report HB0333.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jayson Spiegel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jayson" and the last name "Spiegel" clearly distinguishable.

Jayson L. Spiegel
Gaithersburg, Maryland

Delegate Palakovich Carr Senate Testimony - HB 333

Uploaded by: Julie Palakovich Carr

Position: FAV

JULIE PALAKOVICH CARR
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Ways and Means Committee
Chair, Revenues Subcommittee

Chair, Montgomery County
House Delegation



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 202
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3037
800-492-7122 Ext. 3037
Julie.PalakovichCarr@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 333
General Assembly Vacancy - Political Party Central Committees -
Procedures**

HB 333 would enact safeguards for the appointment process to fill vacancies in the General Assembly. The bill would codify measures to ensure that the appointment process is transparent and inclusive of the public.

The House of Delegates passed this bill in a bipartisan vote of 122 to 7 and previously passed this bill in 2025 and 2024.

Filling a vacancy in the General Assembly is an important responsibility of the Governor and the local central committee of the same party as the departing member. Maryland's Democratic and Republican Central Committees do the difficult work of vetting applicants for legislative appointments.

Although this bill is not about any particular appointment, public trust in the process has been strained at times because of a lack of transparency, leading to concerns about undue influence and backroom deals. In order to maintain public trust, it is essential that the appointment process be carried out with transparency and integrity.

This bill is especially needed due to the extraordinarily high number of legislative vacancies that occur in our state. In the past 10 years, there have been 69 legislative vacancies in Maryland. Over that same time period, Maryland ranked second in the nation in the number of total vacancies in our legislature.

Given the compelling public interest in fair and transparent appointments, other states that use an appointment process have enacted requirements regarding the timeframe, public notification, public input, and voting requirements of the entity that fills the vacancy.¹

¹ For instance, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, and North Dakota

In the three years since Delegate Griffith and I started working on this bill, both the Maryland Democratic and Republican Parties have revised their by-laws. Both parties made reforms that are in keeping with some provisions of this bill. While good reforms have been made, there are still significant differences between the two parties' rules and even among local central committees within a party. HB 333 would ensure that the appointment process is more uniform across the state, providing a level playing field for all individuals seeking nomination to fill a vacancy in the General Assembly, regardless of their party affiliation or county of residency.

What This Bill Does

- Requires that the application period must be open and advertised for at least 7 days.
- Requires translation of the above announcement only if the county in which the central committee is located is required to translate elections materials under section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act.
 - Currently, only Montgomery and Prince George's Counties are required to translate election materials into Spanish.
- Requires that submitted applications must be publicly posted by the central committee or the state party and remain posted for at least 30 days after the vote is taken.
 - Personal information, such as the applicant's home address, can be redacted.
- Requires that a public forum be held by the central committee to interview the candidates. For example, candidate interviews or a candidate forum.
- Requires that a meeting to fill a vacancy in office shall be accessible to the public and announced at least 3 days in advance.
- Requires that a central committee member who has applied for the vacancy has to recuse themselves from voting and from administering the process (e.g. reviewing applications, interviewing candidates).
- Prohibits voting by secret ballot. The vote has to be a roll call or use signed ballots, and the vote must take place in open session.

Testimony in favor of HB0333.pdf

Uploaded by: Liza Smith

Position: FAV

Testimony in Favor of House Bill HB0333

General Assembly Vacancy – Political Party Central
Committee – Procedures

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Hearing Date: March 25, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Liza Smith. I am an elected member of the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee representing District 14. I respectfully urge your support for House Bill 0333.

HB0333 is a commonsense reform that strengthens transparency, fairness, and public trust in the process used to fill vacancies in the Maryland General Assembly.

When a vacancy occurs, central committees are entrusted with making a decision that directly impacts representation for thousands of residents. That

responsibility must be carried out in a way that is open, accountable, and worthy of public confidence.

In Montgomery County, our Central Committee already voluntarily follows the core principles outlined in this legislation. We provide public notice, hold open meetings, allow applicants to be heard, and conduct our decision-making process transparently. These practices ensure that residents can see how decisions are made and understand the qualifications of those seeking to serve.

However, this level of transparency is not consistent across the state. In some jurisdictions, vacancy selections are made with limited public input, minimal notice, or unclear procedures. This inconsistency undermines trust in the process and creates inequities in how representation is determined.

HB0333 establishes a clear, uniform standard by requiring:

- Public notice of vacancies and application procedures
- Open and accessible meetings

- Transparent voting processes
- Ethical safeguards, including recusal requirements for applicants serving on central committees

These are not burdensome requirements. They are basic democratic expectations.

Maryland voters deserve confidence that when they are not directly selecting their representatives, the process used in their place reflects the highest standards of fairness and integrity. Transparency is not optional—it is essential to maintaining trust in our democratic institutions.

This bill does not change who makes the decision. It ensures that how the decision is made is open, fair, and accountable to the public.

As someone who has participated in this process under transparent guidelines, I can say clearly: these practices strengthen—not hinder—the work of central committees.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB0333.

Sincerely,

Liza Smith

Member, Montgomery County Democratic Central
Committee

District 14

03-25-2026 HB333 General Assembly Vacancy - Politi

Uploaded by: Nikki Tyree

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE**

HB 333 General Assembly Vacancy - Political Party Central Committees - Procedures

Position: Favorable with Amendments

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

Date: March 25, 2026

The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports House Bill 333, requiring transparency in the process of selecting a candidate to fill a seat in the General Assembly when it is left vacant by the Central Committees.

Since 1985, the League of Women Voters has supported additional statewide standards regulating the central committee nominating process to fill legislative vacancies, public notice of meetings within the vacated district for public input, the public announcement of candidates prior to that meeting, and a publicly recorded vote of each committee member. HB 333 would support this position.

With Maryland having such a high rate of appointed legislators, creating a transparent process of how those who are appointed would allow voters to know who is representing them, and allow them to participate in public meetings before the appointment.

LWVMD would respectfully request an amendment to this bill that would ensure that when a name is put forth for an appointment, along with their application, there shall be a disclosure to attest to how the candidate may know any member who sits on the committee in a professional or personal capacity.

Since 1985, the League of Women Voters of Maryland has supported the use of special elections to fill vacancies in the office of Senator or Delegate. We strongly believe that legislative representatives should be selected by their constituents rather than potentially serve nearly a full four-year term based on appointment by the Governor. While HB 333 does not allow for special elections, LWVMD is pleased that it shows a positive step in that direction and creates more transparency around the process.

We urge a favorable report, with LWVMD's proposed amendment, on HB 333.

HB0333 crossover bill FAV - General Assembly Vacan

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB0333 CrossoverBill_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

03/25/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON CROSSOVER BILL HB#0333- POSITION: FAVORABLE
General Assembly Vacancy - Political Party Central Committee – Procedures

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 crossover HB#0333, **General Assembly Vacancy - Political Party Central Committee – Procedures**

If there is a vacancy in the [Maryland General Assembly](#), the [governor](#) is responsible for appointing a replacement.

The governor makes an appointment based on the recommendations of the political party committee that holds the vacant seat. The political party committee has up to 30 days after the vacancy to submit a list of recommended candidates to the governor. If the party committee fails to act by the 30-day deadline, or if the former officeholder was not affiliated with any party, the governor has 15 days to appoint a person from the political party that last held the seat. The person appointed to the seat serves for the remainder of the unfilled term. ¹

As documented by an AI query: ²

Recent, more specific data from early 2026 suggests that roughly **13-15%** of the specific House and Senate chambers were filled via appointment as of February 2026, though the figure is higher in specific regions, such as Montgomery County, where analysis has shown up to 40% of their local delegation was initially appointed.

Thus, the current system lets a party committee make a decision without public notice or input on the selection and lets current members of that party leadership vote for themselves to fill the empty office. To add more public input and make the process fairer for the citizens of the affected jurisdiction this bill will establish requirements for the filling of a vacancy in the office of Senator or Delegate in the General Assembly by a central committee of a political party under the Maryland Constitution relating to applications, public notice, public meetings, and voting; and requiring a member of the central committee who has applied to fill the vacancy to recuse themselves from voting on the individual to fill the vacancy.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on crossover bill HB#0333.

¹ https://ballotpedia.org/How_vacancies_are_filled_in_state_legislatures#Maryland

² Google Search “how many current maryland general assembly seats were filled by appointment instead of an election”