

HB 1378 FAV

Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

Dear Government, Labor, and Elections Committee Members

HB 1378 proposes a change in Maryland's law that authorizes creation of corporations to explicitly bar corporations from election activity.

By using their authority to define what corporations are—and what powers they hold—states can end the era of corporate and dark money in U.S. politics. The authority to decide which powers states grant to the corporations they charter includes the authority to not grant their corporations the power to spend in politics.

Since *Citizens United* opened the floodgates to unlimited outside spending, ordinary citizens' voices have been drowned out and super PACs and dark money nonprofits have poured billions into politics. The result is a collapse of public trust. HB1378 provides an opportunity to reinstate public trust.

Courts have held the right of corporations to spend in politics to be parallel to citizens. But if a state were to no longer grant that power to its corporations, the right could no longer attach; there would be nothing to attach it to. When a state exercises its authority to define corporations as entities without the power to spend in politics, it will no longer be relevant to discuss whether the corporations have a right to spend in politics, because without the power to do so, the right to do so has no meaning.

I urge a favorable report.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Maryrose Wilson

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