

February 25, 2026

**Testimony on HB 962**  
**Local Public Campaign Financing – County Boards of Education**  
**Government, Labor, and Elections Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

The groups above support HB 962, which would expand on the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 (CFRA) by allowing local jurisdictions to establish or expand existing public campaign finance systems to cover county boards of education.

The Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 included language that allowed counties to create public campaign funding programs that would allow candidates for county council and county executive to run for office with the support of their communities. The Montgomery County Council quickly passed their own program by unanimous vote in 2014, successfully using the program during the 2018 election cycle. Since then, Howard County, Prince George's County, Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore County have established a program.

During the 2026 election cycle, five local jurisdictions programs are in use, with three of these programs in use for the first time. Over forty candidates have opted to use these programs, with a diverse mixture of incumbents and first-time candidates who are competitively fundraising by soliciting only small-dollar donations from individual members of their community. Some of the candidate for county executive and council have already qualified for matching funds.

These programs have been gaining popularity in Maryland for a simple reason: particularly since the *Citizens United* decision, Americans across the political spectrum feel that our campaign system is disconnected from the populace, and that LLCs and wealthy individuals render regular Marylanders' voices meaningless in the current campaign finance environment. Small dollar public funding programs, on the other hand, lift up regular Marylanders' voices, and empower those with community-supported ideas who may not have connections to deep-pocketed interests.

While CFRA allows counties to address this problem for county council candidates, the problem exists at every level, including local school board races where the costs of running competitive races have significantly increased. Common Cause Maryland support amplifying the voices of regular Americans in every election for every office, and so we request a favorable report on HB 962 to allow jurisdiction to continue to expand public funding programs at their discretion.