



MARYLAND FORWARD PARTY

Not Left. Not Right. Forward.

BILL NO: HB0101

TITLE: Public Broadcasters - Debate for Candidates for Statewide Office - Required Participants

COMMITTEE: Government, Labor and Elections

POSITION: FAVORABLE

DATE: February 4, 2028

TO: Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee

FROM: Maryland Forward Party

SUBJECT: Debates Held on Maryland State Supported Public Broadcasting

Maryland Forward Party, representing a growing coalition including the state's large Unaffiliated population, **strongly supports HB0101**. Maryland voters deserve to hear from every candidate who will appear on their ballot. Yet Maryland Public Television and other state-funded broadcasters have routinely excluded qualified third-party and independent candidates from televised debates.

Currently, Maryland Public Television excludes ballot-certified candidates from televised debates using criteria that have nothing to do with legal qualification for office. This practice limits voter education, excludes independent voices in favor of established parties, and stifles competition.

HB0101 requires any public broadcaster that hosts a general election debate to invite all candidates certified to the ballot for statewide office. This replaces arbitrary polling and fundraising thresholds with a clear standard, and creates a reasonable condition for receiving public funds.

Maryland Forward Party believes that publicly funded platforms must serve all voters, not just those aligned with major parties. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on HB0101.

Sincerely,

Lee Bradshaw

Legislative Committee Chair

Maryland Forward Party