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Environment and Transportation
Committee

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Agriculture and Aquaculture

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Environment

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 11, 2026

**Testimony in Favor of House Bill 568
Public Financing Act – State Senate and House of Delegates Candidates**

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

I respectfully request a favorable report of House Bill 568 to expand Maryland's current small donor public campaign financing program from just Gubernatorial candidates to candidates running for State Senate or House of Delegates.

Over the last two decades we have seen a drastic increase in the amount of corporate and special interest spending in our elections, and in turn, the voices of those that we represent continue to be diminished. It is clear that now more than ever we have to do everything we can to strengthen the voices of our constituents in the electoral process.

The good news is that we know what one of the best solutions is to combat this growing trend – and that is implementing small donor public financing programs for those running for office. Small donor public financing programs encourage small donor participation by providing matching funding for local small campaign contributions. In exchange, participating candidates must only accept small donations and donations from individuals, not corporate, PAC, or special interest dollars.

While public financing programs have the inherent benefit of limiting the amount of corporate and special interest money flowing into our elections, they also can positively change the entire tenor of our elections by allowing more regular folks to run for office; enabling candidates to spend more time directly meeting and listening to constituents; and, making elected office holders more reflective of the communities they serve.

We can look across the Country to see that public financing is working as there are several other States that have taken the lead on implementing public financing for Gubernatorial or Statewide races: Florida, Arizona, New Mexico, West Virginia, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, Hawaii, and Rhode Island, and also for State Legislative races: Arizona, Minnesota, Maine, Vermont, New York, and Hawaii.

Right here in Maryland we have already started the implementation of public financing – going all the way back to the 1970's when the Gubernatorial Fair Financing Fund was originally established – with Governor Hogan using public financing in his 2014 race for Governor. The

legislature has also made other advances by passing the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 which authorized local jurisdictions to implement local public financing programs and in turn now there are several counties (Anne Arundel, Montgomery, Prince George’s, Howard, Baltimore, and Baltimore City) who have implemented such a local program. This amounts to over 65% of Marylanders living in jurisdictions that have public financing at the local level. In 2021, the General Assembly passed the [Maryland Fair Elections Act](#), to strengthen the program and align it with the counties. This legislation would make sure that this option exists for us here in the General Assembly.

The program designed under House Bill 568 is similar to others operating at the Statewide and local levels, and here are the key highlights of what this public financing program would look like for General Assembly campaigns:

- 1. Candidates who choose small donor public financing would need to meet rigorous, but realistic requirements to qualify for public matching funds.**
State Senate candidates would need 250 eligible donations for an aggregate total of \$15,000 and House of Delegate candidates would need 150 eligible donations for an aggregate total of at least \$7,500.
- 2. Candidates who choose small donor public financing would be limited to only accepting eligible private donations of up to \$250.**
- 3. Candidates who choose small donor public financing must refuse donations from large donors, PACs, corporations, other candidates and political parties.**
- 4. Candidates would be eligible for a total match in both the primary and general elections that is meaningful and would allow for competitive elections.** State Senate candidates would be eligible for a total of \$125,000 public match in both the Primary and General elections. House of Delegate candidates would be eligible for a total of \$75,000 public match in both the Primary and General elections.
- 5. Matching contribution rates are similar to other public financing rates operating in the State.**

Matching Contribution Breakdown	Amount of Public Match	Example \$250 Contribution Breakdown
First \$50 of Contribution	\$6-to-\$1 Public Match	\$50 + \$300 = \$350 Total Contribution
Second \$50 of Contribution	\$3-to-\$1 Public Match	\$50 + \$150 = \$200 Total Contribution
Third \$50 of Contribution	\$2-to-\$1 Public Match	\$50 + \$100 = \$150 Total Contribution
Remaining \$100 of Contribution	No Public Match	\$100 Total Contribution

A \$250 eligible donation would mean a total campaign contribution of \$800

With all of this in mind, I respectfully request a favorable report of House Bill 568 to help create an alternative to increasing corporate and special interest money, change who can run for office, and make us more accountable to our citizens.