



HB 1360: Maryland Public Ethics Law - Regulated Lobbyists - Reporting Requirements

Position: Favorable

March 6, 2026

Dear Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

F Minus and the undersigned 14 organizations respectfully encourage the Committee to report favorably on HB 1360 and to champion its passage by the General Assembly. This common-sense legislation would help solve three long-standing problems with Maryland's lobbyist disclosure system.

Absence of timely disclosure: Of 18 states that require lobbyists to disclose bill numbers, Maryland is the only state that does require lobbyists to disclose that essential information while its legislature is in session. (See Figure 1 below.) Allowing lobbyists to wait until May 31 to disclose their in-session activity deprives the public of the kind of meaningful, timely, and actionable information that is available in many other states. HB 1360 addresses this problem by adding two in-session activity reports to be filed by lobbyists.

Noncompliance with disclosure requirements: F Minus audits of disclosures by more than 60 fossil fuel lobbyists for 2024 and 2025 found half of these lobbyists failing to comply with a requirement to disclose the numbers of the bills on which they had lobbied. The Maryland Ethics Commission has reviewed these audits and is now asking numerous lobbyists to file corrected reports that fully list bills they lobbied on in 2025. By adding in-session activity reports, HB 1360 makes it easier for the public and the Ethics Commission to identify instances of non-disclosure during session, and for the Commission to direct lobbyists to file corrected reports during session.

Non-disclosure of positions taken on legislation: Eight states – including New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Colorado – require lobbyists to disclose the positions they take on bills. In Colorado, research by F Minus and Brown University's Climate and Development Lab has identified numerous lobbyists who simultaneously lobby for and against the same bills on behalf of different clients. By requiring lobbyists to disclose the

positions they take on bills, HB 1360 empowers both the public and lobbyists' own clients to track what lobbyists are doing on behalf of each client, and identify instances in which clients' different interests may conflict.

For these reasons, we the undersigned groups urge you to support HB 1360 and strengthen Maryland's lobbyist disclosure system.

F Minus

Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group

CCAN AF

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry

Climate Communications Coalition

Coal Kills Baltimore

Common Cause Maryland

Howard County Climate Action

Illuminate Maryland

Indivisible HoCoMD

Maryland Energy Advocates Coalition

Maryland Legislative Coalition - Climate Justice Wing

Mizrahi Family Charitable Fund

Nuclear Information and Resource Center

Route 202 Neighborhood Coalition

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Explanation of Figure 1: Legislative Sessions & Disclosure Periods

The figure below shows that Maryland, among the 18 states that require lobbyists to disclose bill numbers, is the only state that does not require disclosure of this information at least once while their legislature is in session each year. **Every other state on this list has found a way to make this information about bill numbers public in a timely way that makes it possible to hold lobbyists accountable for what they are doing during a session while the session is still happening.**

The In-Session disclosure column in Figure 1 shows the total number of lobbyist reports filed during each state's legislative session, some of which are one-year long, and some of which are two-years long.

Types of disclosure in other states

Continuous disclosure: Colorado requires lobbyists to disclose positions taken on legislation within 72 hours of doing so. Iowa requires this disclosure before lobbying can begin. Wisconsin requires disclosures of new lobbying activity within 15 days.

Monthly disclosure: many states avoid having a disclosure lag by requiring monthly disclosure. Examples of this are Maine, Kentucky, and Idaho. New York is bimonthly.

Quarterly disclosure: even quarterly disclosure guarantees that New Jersey, Delaware, and Nebraska will have in-session disclosure.

Additional disclosure during session: other states with short legislative sessions have lobbyists file additional reports during session, so that information provided to the public is current. Examples of this are Rhode Island and Montana.

Disclosure of bills numbers and other information in states with short sessions

Colorado: five-month session

Colorado has the strongest disclosure system in the country, with monthly reporting of compensation received from each client and bills lobbied upon. Lobbyists must also disclose new positions taken on bills within 72 hours of doing so.

Maine: four-month session

Maine lobbyists file monthly reports disclosing bills lobbied upon and compensation from each client. Maine does not require disclosure of positions taken on bills.

Rhode Island: six-month session

To ensure timely disclosure, Rhode Island has lobbyists file monthly reports while the legislation is in session, then quarterly reports for the rest of the year. Compensation, bill numbers, and positions taken are disclosed in each report.

Washington: four-month session in odd-numbered years; six-week session in even-numbered years

Beginning in 2024, lobbyists were required to disclose bill numbers in addition to compensation in their monthly reports. In Oct. 2024, an F Minus [audit](#) looked at the state's top ten fossil fuel firms and found that all of them were less likely to disclose bills worked upon for fossil fuel clients versus other clients; and some of them never disclosed bills worked upon for fossil fuel clients.

Delaware: biennial with six months in session each year

Lobbyists disclose bill numbers quarterly, but because each session occurs over two years, there are five disclosures of current lobbying activity for each two-year session. No compensation of positions or compensation.

Kentucky: four-month session

Monthly disclosure of bill numbers and compensation.

Iowa: four-month session

Lobbyists must make a "legislative declaration" stating bill number and position before they can begin lobbying on it, so disclosure of these activities is not only current, it happens before the activities begin.

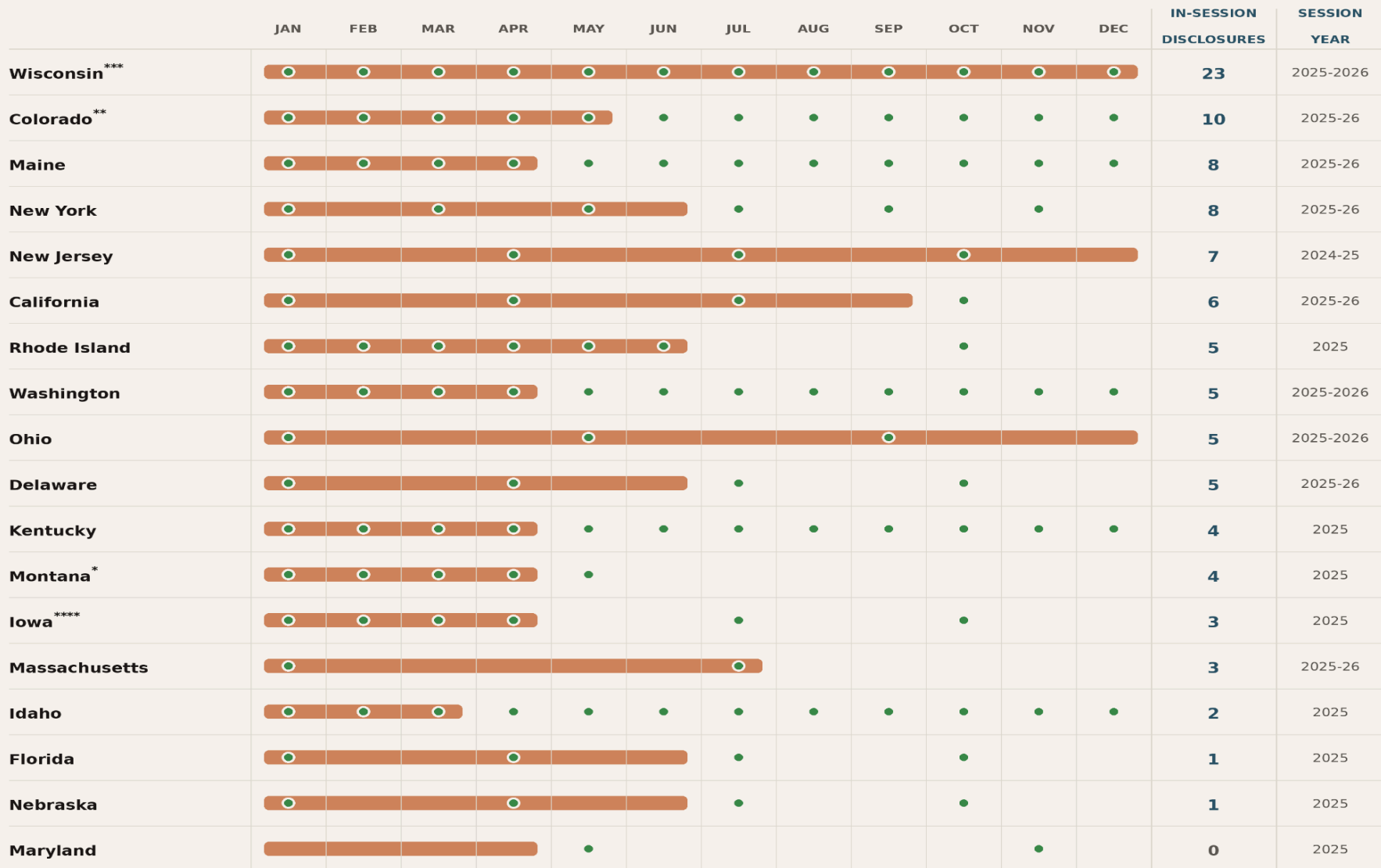
Massachusetts: biennial with six months in session each year

While lobbyists only disclose bills numbers, positions, and compensation twice a year, the state has a two-year session over all, so that there are three instances of disclosing ongoing activities each session.

Figure 1: 2025 Legislative Sessions & Disclosure Periods

Bar = session duration · Dot = disclosure month

■ Session duration ● Disclosure month



* Montana requires disclosure in Feb., Mar., and Apr. for clients spending more than \$2,500 in the previous month.

** Colorado requires disclosure of firms beginning to lobby on a bill within 72 hours of this activity.

*** Wisconsin requires disclosure of firms beginning to lobby on a bill within two weeks of this activity.

**** Iowa requires lobbyists to disclose a position on a bill before lobbying on it.

Inside Climate News

Lobbyist Disclosure Failures Disadvantage Maryland Climate Advocates, According to Audit

The opaque system allows industry operatives to shape legislative decisions with little public oversight, a nonprofit research group has found.

By [Aman Azhar](#)

March 2, 2026

As Maryland lawmakers weigh proposals aimed at reining in utility companies, lowering electricity prices and expanding the state's low-carbon energy system, a new audit report has found that the lobbyists who want to influence those decisions have largely operated in the dark—and done so legally.

The [audit](#), conducted by the nonprofit research group F Minus, found that lobbyists for fossil fuel companies complied with Maryland's requirement to disclose which specific bills they lobbied for only 55 percent of the time during the first half of 2025. Without that information, the authors say, it is nearly

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impossible for the public to know which bills industry representatives opposed or what, if any, positions they took on key climate and energy bills at the time those decisions were being made.

The report examined 95 activity reports filed between November 2024 and April 2025 by 68 lobbyists representing 25 fossil fuel and waste-to-energy companies, and documented what it describes as a pattern of systematic noncompliance that not only obscures industry opposition to climate legislation but also exposes conflicts of interest wherein firms simultaneously represented health organizations and fossil fuel companies accused of contributing to pollution and climate change.

Under Maryland law, lobbyists are required to file activity reports twice a year, in May and November, and include their earnings and expenditures. Maryland Ethics Commission (MEC) guidance says these reports should include legislative bill numbers “where possible,” which advocates say leaves open a loophole resulting in uneven compliance. Reports covering the January through April legislative session are not due until May 31, after the legislative session ends and key signing or veto decisions have already been made.

Violations include civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per violation, and late activity report filing fees of \$10 per day, up to a maximum of \$1,000 per late report. The ethics commission can suspend a lobbyist’s registration for certain violations. Criminal penalties for willful violations can include misdemeanor charges with fines of up to \$1,000 and imprisonment, with each day counting as a separate offense.

While the F Minus report suggests enforcement has been inconsistent, it noted that “an uptick in fossil fuel lobbyists disclosing bill numbers in 2025 over 2024 suggests that an MEC focus on this issue in its own audits is beginning to instill a greater culture of compliance.”

“Maryland’s disclosure system is designed to fail because lobbyists don’t have to report what they’re doing during the ... session until the end of May, when it’s too late for the public or even their own clients to hold

them accountable,” said James Browning, founder of F Minus. “When the most consequential climate decisions are being made, the paper trail is basically blank.”

Under Gov. Wes Moore, the state has expanded its renewable energy and climate commitments, but those ambitions are undermined by a lobbying system that operates with “a high degree of secrecy,” F Minus argued.

The Maryland audit is part of a broader campaign to expose lobbying firms working simultaneously for polluters and for schools, hospitals and community groups affected by pollution, identified in the audit as “double agents.”

The audit focused on lobbyists who indicated on their disclosure forms that they had lobbied on legislation, but then did not mention any bill numbers. F Minus pieced together their activity bill by bill, using committee agendas, written testimony and video archives, examining 14 significant measures related to climate, energy or environmental justice.

The audit found that three Annapolis firms—Capitol Strategies, Cornerstone Government Affairs and Evans & Associates—did not disclose a single bill number for their fossil fuel clients despite extensive evidence of their legislative activity. In one instance, Cornerstone’s Bernie Marczyk submitted testimony for the American Petroleum Institute opposing the Better Buildings Act but his disclosure form described his work as “general representation.” The legislation was aimed at limiting fossil fuel use to power new buildings and construction.

Years earlier, Marczyk and Cornerstone did not disclose that the firm had lobbied against Maryland’s Climate Solutions Now Act in 2022 on behalf of API even as another Cornerstone client, Johns Hopkins University, publicly supported the bill. A similar F Minus audit in Washington State found that lobbyists

were far more likely to disclose bill numbers when representing public-interest clients than fossil fuel accounts, a pattern F Minus described as “selective transparency.”

The report says fossil fuel lobbyists were “most likely to omit from their disclosures” while working to defeat the Better Buildings Act. Sarah Peters of Husch Blackwell Strategies lobbied against the bill for the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Energy Solutions without listing it in her filings. Brittany Jones did the same for Baltimore Gas and Electric. The bill failed to reach the floor for a vote and died in committee.

“We can’t conclusively prove intent,” Browning said in his written response to Inside Climate News. “But it’s striking that this was the bill with the most nondisclosure and that it ultimately failed. These lobbyists were, to varying degrees, able to keep their fingerprints off that outcome,” he said, and added that some of the lobbyists the audit flagged for nondisclosure later filed corrected activity reports for 2025.

In their analysis, the auditors found multiple instances of this “double agent” activity.

Schwartz, Metz, Fine & Kauffman, for instance, lobbied for the RENEW Act on behalf of the state medical society, MedChi, which testified that fossil fuel production is linked to respiratory disease, heart disease, strokes and cancer. At the same time, the firm lobbied against environmental justice protections and renewable-energy reforms for the National Waste & Recycling Association. The firm also represents the Maryland chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which warned of “preventable” pediatric health risks from air pollution, and BGE.

“That’s the essence of the double-agent problem,” Browning noted. “[E]ntities like MedChi and the American Academy of Pediatrics work to raise awareness about the threat that indoor air pollution poses to child health, and then they go out and hire lobbyists who work for companies whose incinerators are

exposing children to toxic fumes.” Neither MedChi nor the Maryland chapter of AAP responded to Inside Climate News’ requests for comment.

“Those matters have been disclosed and discussed. We are comfortable with how our lobbying firm is managing its portfolio,” said Nellie Power, executive director of the American Academy of Pediatrics Maryland chapter.

Gene Ransom, CEO of MedChi, said Schwartz, Metz, Wise & Kauffman “does a fantastic job for MedChi, always discloses conflicts and we work collaboratively to manage them appropriately.” In emailed comments, Ransom added that his organization has “other lobbyists” to represent its “environmental health agenda.”

This action is particularly menacing for places like Curtis Bay, the South Baltimore neighborhood ranked among Maryland’s highest-burden communities for cumulative environmental and health risks. Curtis Bay residents live next to the CSX coal export terminal and a medical-waste facility whose operators previously pleaded guilty to criminal violations over improper waste handling and were fined \$1.75 million total in 2024.



A view of the CSX facilities from the Curtis Bay neighborhood in Baltimore. Credit: Jessica Gallagher/Baltimore Banner

Win Waste, which operates the incinerator seen along I-95, bordering Curtis Bay, shares a lobbyist with Johns Hopkins University.

“It’s disturbing to see Johns Hopkins, whose researchers are trying to quantify health harms from that incinerator, sharing a lobbying firm with the incinerator’s owners,” Browning said. “Student tuition and donor dollars are funding the research, and the same lobbying shop.”

The F Minus audit also found that CSX retained Capitol Strategies in 2025 to oppose legislation that would have imposed a tax on coal transport, but the firm’s activity reports made no mention of the bill even though testimony records show lobbyist Sushant Sidh appearing before the House Environment and Transportation Committee to argue against it. In a 2023 interview, Sidh described his firm’s conflict-of-interest checks as “exhaustive.”

The opacity also extends to campaign finance. The auditors found that in 2024, Gov. Wes Moore received contributions from lobbyists at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, a Washington firm whose clients include ExxonMobil and multiple fracking companies, and which F Minus describes as “one of the most pro-Trump and most pro-fossil-fuel Congressional lobbying firms.”

In response to questions from Inside Climate News, Rhyen Lake, a press representative for Moore, said in an emailed statement: “Gov. Moore is unequivocally committed to advancing climate action and protecting Marylanders from the impacts of pollution and climate change — and he has the record to prove it. No contribution has any influence over his decisions, and the Governor supports strong transparency laws in Maryland.”

Inside Climate News reached out to the lobbying firms and the lobbyists mentioned in the report for comment. The only firm to respond was Evans & Associates, which said, in a statement, that the firm is “fully committed to compliance with all applicable ethics and disclosure requirements.”

Climate advocates were caught off guard when Moore vetoed three climate-related bills in 2025, including the RENEW Act, which would have required Maryland to study the full social costs of greenhouse gas emissions. In December 2025, Moore announced that the state would conduct a similar climate-cost study financed through the Strategic Energy Investment Fund, heeding sustained calls from environmental groups.

“An early warning system for Moore’s anti-climate swerve would have been full disclosure of what lobbyists supporting those vetoes were doing in the middle of the 2025 session,” Browning said. “We still don’t know the full extent of the lobbying that led up to those decisions.”

In emailed comments, Jennifer Allgair, executive director of the Maryland State Ethics Commission, said the agency uses an electronic system to flag late filings and conducts periodic audits, but does not publish a consolidated breakdown of violations beyond public orders posted on its website.

In response to Inside Climate News’ questions, Allgair said the commission had received the F Minus’ findings and would “follow up accordingly,” but declined to comment on individual lobbyists or clients, citing confidentiality rules.

The transparency failures stem from a weak statute, limited enforcement and a political culture reluctant to confront powerful firms, Browning noted. “The legislature has kept the ethics commission on a tight budget,” he said. “They need more staff focused on lobbyist reporting, plus a modern database that lets anyone generate, with a single click, a list of all lobbyists and all of their activity.”

Legislators have started to pay attention. Del. Mary Lehman, a Democrat from Prince George’s County, has introduced House Bill 1360, which would add two in-session activity reports, in mid-February and mid-March, and require lobbyists to disclose their positions on specific bills.

Sen. Cheryl Kagan, who pushed a 2023 law requiring the ethics commission to stream its meetings online, has been a frequent critic of the agency’s technology and may press for expanded audit authority this session, according to advocates.

Emily Scarr, director of MarylandPIRG, said her organization encountered similar problems when examining utility political spending in its “Politics of Power II” report, which found scant reporting on lobbyists’ positions and serious hurdles for the public in tracking their work.

“Utilities are regulated monopolies with enormous influence,” Scarr said. “Marylanders should be able to see, in real time, who is lobbying on which bill and what position they are taking.” She pointed to the state’s new campaign finance database as proof that a user-friendly lobbying dashboard, housed at the ethics commission, is technically feasible.

As the 2026 General Assembly session unfolds, F Minus auditors are closely watching several bills they believe are likely targets for undisclosed fossil fuel or utility lobbying, among them the Affordable Solar Act, a proposal known as Breaking STRIDE that would scrutinize how gas utilities recover pipeline costs

and the Climate Crimes Accountability Act, which would expand liability for major greenhouse gas polluters.

“If these bills are weakened or defeated, the communities that will pay the price are the ones already living next to pipelines, power plants and incinerators,” Browning said. “And unless Maryland fixes its disclosure law, they may never know who helped make that happen.”