



MLSC

MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

IOLTA - INTEREST ON LAWYER TRUST ACCOUNTS

House Bill 15

Public Information Act – Public Records – Nonprofit Organizations

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee, February 10, 2026

Position: Unfavorable

Maryland Legal Services Corporation (“MLSC”) respectfully requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 15.

MLSC’s mission is to ensure low-income Marylanders have access to stable, efficient, and effective civil legal assistance through the distribution of funds to nonprofit legal services organizations across the state. The Maryland General Assembly created MLSC as an independent nonprofit organization in 1982 to administer the state’s Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program, and MLSC currently funds more than fifty nonprofit legal services providers serving communities throughout Maryland.

House Bill 15 would significantly expand the scope of the Maryland Public Information Act by redefining “public record” to include documentary material created or maintained by nonprofit organizations that receive \$50,000 or more annually in public funding. While MLSC supports transparency and accountability in the use of public funds, this bill represents a fundamental and overly broad expansion of the Public Information Act that would have serious unintended consequences for nonprofit organizations across the state.

Nonprofit organizations are private entities with independent governance structures and fiduciary obligations, many of which include strict confidentiality requirements related to clients, employees, donors, and internal operations. Subjecting nonprofits to Public Information Act requirements would impose significant administrative and legal burdens that they are not structured or resourced to manage. For legal services providers, the bill raises particular concerns regarding the protection of attorney-client privilege, work product, and sensitive client information.

House Bill 15 would also divert limited nonprofit resources away from direct services and toward compliance activities, including record retention, review, redaction, and response to public records requests. These burdens would fall disproportionately on small and mid-sized nonprofits and could deter organizations from participating in state and local programs and would have a chilling effect on private donors who may be reluctant to support organizations subject to sweeping public disclosure requirements.

For these reasons, Maryland Legal Services Corporation respectfully opposes House Bill 15 and urges an unfavorable report. If we can provide any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Siri, Executive Director at 443-961-5596 or msiri@mlsc.org.