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**HB 15**

**Public Information Act - Public Records - Nonprofit Organizations**

Hearing before the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

Feb. 10, 2026

**POSITION: Unfavorable**

Community Law Center (CLC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which is a legal partner to Maryland neighborhoods and nonprofits in pursuit of more just and vibrant communities. CLC provides direct legal representation to communities and nonprofits on issues like tax exemption and organizational governance, real estate, contracts, intellectual property, employment law, and more. We advocate on issues that impact our Maryland neighborhood and nonprofit clients, including nuisance and vacant properties.

**CLC opposes HB 15 because it is an unnecessary and burdensome regulation on nonprofits and contradicts the common understanding of what a public record is.** Nonprofits provide critical benefits to Maryland residents and neighborhoods, and are governed by their Board of Directors and by local, state, and federal regulations to ensure that they provide charitable and educational benefits to the public at large according to their charitable purposes. But ultimately, although nonprofits may receive funding from public sources like state grants (along with private donations, grants, and fees-for-service), nonprofits are not part of any local, state, or federal government entity. They are separate institutions, and should not be considered an instrumentality of the state whose documents, correspondence, employee salaries, or other materials should be made available as public records. A “public record” is commonly and widely understood to be the records of a government agency or unit, produced by the government on behalf of the public as a whole. Expanding this definition to follow government funding would produce results that might make private for-profit businesses hesitate to do business with the state – are private companies that are paid more than \$50,000 by the state now at risk of having their business records made public as well?

If passed, this bill would impose a significant burden on nonprofits, many of which produce positive results for Marylanders far beyond what should be possible based on their shoestring budgets, through the extraordinary efforts of their staff and volunteers. To hold nonprofits to the same standard as government agencies to preserve and maintain and make their records available to the public would be unnecessarily burdensome, and would take away from the ability of these organizations to do their charitable work. Maryland residents would be worse off if HB 15 passes, imposing new, extraordinary, and unnecessary regulations on the nonprofits that serve our state. CLC opposes HB 15. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

For the above reasons,

**CLC urges an UNFAVORABLE VOTE ON HB 15.**

Please contact Shana Roth-Gormley, Staff Attorney at Community Law Center, with any questions.

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