

HB0157_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

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Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#/0157- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Election Law - Campaign Finance - Exploratory Committees

TO: Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#/0157, **Election Law - Campaign Finance - Exploratory Committees**

An exploratory committee for a possible candidacy permit, at the current time, the use of dark money to influence elections in Maryland. Campaignlegal.org has studied and documented this problem in their post *5 Ways Secret Money Makes Its Way into our Elections*¹

Secret money in the political process deprives voters of information necessary to make informed electoral choices and makes our electoral system vulnerable to corruption and manipulation. Often used by wealthy special interests to rig the political system in their favor, secret money, also known as dark money, hinders progress on policy issues important to ordinary Americans like healthcare and tax reform.

To reduce political corruption, we need real transparency about who is spending on elections so that politicians cannot benefit from unlimited, secret money from special interests to support their campaigns. Voters have a right to know who is spending big money to secretly influence our vote and our government to rig the political system in their favor.

As noted by [James Bryce Bryce \(Viscount\)](#) in his *The American Commonwealth, Volume 2*, 1891

Selfishness, injustice, cruelty, tricks, and jobs of all sorts shun the light; to expose them is to defeat them. No serious evils, no rankling sore in the body politic, can remain long concealed, and when disclosed, it is half destroyed.

Maryland has the opportunity to add transparency to campaigns in Maryland by passing this bill applying certain campaign finance requirements for a political committee to exploratory committees; establishing requirements and prohibitions for exploratory committees relating to the establishment of the committees, receipt of funds, and permissible disbursements; requiring an authorized candidate campaign committee that results from the exploratory committee to make any equipment purchases from the exploratory committee at the fair market value of the equipment; etc.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#/0157.

¹ <https://campaignlegal.org/update/5-ways-secret-money-makes-its-way-our-elections>