

GARY SIMMONS
Legislative District 12B
Anne Arundel County

Judiciary Committee
Subcommittees

Criminal Law and Procedure
Family and Juvenile Law



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 152
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3581 · 301-858-3581
800-492-7122 Ext. 3581
Gary.Simmons@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Good afternoon, Chair and Members of the Committee,

I, Delegate Gary Simmons respectfully submit this testimony in support of HB101.

The principle behind this legislation is straightforward and non-partisan: if an individual has met the legal requirements established by the State of Maryland to run for statewide office, that individual should also be eligible to “respond in the debate”. Debate participation should be aligned with ballot qualification, not subject to additional or subjective standards.

Debates exist to serve the public interest. They are one of the few opportunities’ voters have to hear directly from candidates, compare candidate’s ideas, and evaluate leadership styles in an open forum. When qualified candidates are excluded from debates, voters receive an incomplete picture of their choices, and the democratic process becomes less transparent.

HB101 does not change who may run for office, nor does it lower existing qualifications. Instead, the bill establishes clear, objective criteria that protect candidates and the public from arbitrary decision-making. Importantly, this legislation is not about political parties, ideology, or outcomes. It is about process. A healthy democracy depends on equal treatment, open access, and informed voters. Ensuring that all qualified candidates may participate in debates strengthens public confidence in elections and reinforces the integrity of Maryland’s democratic institutions.

HB101 affirms that elections should be governed by fairness and clarity, not gatekeeping. For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on HB101.

Thank you for your consideration,

Delegate Gary Simmons

Anne Arundel County, District 12b