



**TESTIMONY FOR  
HB0157 – Election Law – Campaign Finance – Exploratory Committees**

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Palakovich Carr

**Committee:** House Government, Labor, and Elections

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Aileen Alex, Co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0157 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are an association of unpaid citizen advocates—individuals and grassroots groups in every district across the state—representing and supporting more than 30,000 Marylanders.

HB0157 creates a clear legal framework for exploratory committees in Maryland's campaign finance system. While exploratory committees are commonly used in many states, Maryland law has not previously defined them or set standards for how they may operate. This bill fills that gap by establishing what an exploratory committee is, applying appropriate campaign finance rules, and outlining how funds may be raised and spent during the exploratory period.

The bill also includes important guardrails. It requires exploratory committees to follow many of the same transparency and reporting requirements that apply to political committees, while recognizing that exploratory efforts are distinct from formal candidacies. It ensures that donations to exploratory committees are properly tracked, that funds are used only for permissible purposes, and that any remaining funds are handled responsibly if the individual decides to run for office. These provisions bring clarity, accountability, and consistency to a part of the political process that has long operated without clear rules.

HB0157 directly supports the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. Our work is rooted in strengthening democratic participation, promoting transparency, and ensuring that Marylanders can trust the systems that govern

their elections. By defining exploratory committees and establishing clear standards for their operation, this bill increases public confidence in the early stages of campaign activity and helps prevent misuse of funds or confusion about a potential candidate's status. A more transparent and accountable campaign finance system benefits voters, candidates, and the health of our democracy.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a **FAVORABLE** report on HB0157.