

**BILL: HB50**

**FAV**

**Howard D. Schoenholtz**

**5810 Ogden Court**

**Bethesda, MD 20816**

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

**Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit written testimony in favor of Bill HB 50, “General Assembly – Special Elections to Fill a Vacancy in Office.” My name is Howard Schoenholtz, and I am a resident of District 16 in Bethesda in Montgomery County. Our district is the poster child for why this bill should be enacted – three of the four members of our delegation were appointed to their positions, and two of those three appointees have not faced the voters of the district.**

**HB 50 takes a common-sense approach to mitigate this problem. By mandating a change to Maryland’s constitution to add special elections as a way of filling vacant seats, it would restore and uphold the concept of “government by the People” in our great state. The bill also would change the constitution to set the circumstances under which the Governor can call for a special election. By doing this, HB50 ensures that the residents of the affected jurisdiction will continue to have full representation at the state level while the process to fill the vacant seat takes its course.**

**I am aware that some opponents of this bill claim that there would not be enough time for candidates in the special election to raise money and get their message out to the voters. There has also been some concern expressed about whether local Boards of Elections have the bandwidth to handle special elections on short notice.**

**To my mind, what we are considering here is the importance of the challenges posed to both candidates and administrators by such special elections versus the importance of upholding the basic tenant of our Democracy that the People shall elect their representatives. The conclusion must be that the right of the People to cast their ballots must always win.**

**The fact of the matter is that we would all probably be better off with shorter, less expensive, campaign seasons, not just for general elections, but for special elections as well. Candidates, political parties, and administrators have shown themselves to be resilient and able to meet the challenges they face. A special election may be a challenging enterprise, but I am sure they are all up to the task.**

**In closing, I ask you to vote to approve HB 50. At a time when our Democracy is in peril, protecting the ability of citizens to vote for their representatives is vitally important. HB 50 is an important step in the right direction.**

**Thank you for your time and attention.**