



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HOUSE BILL 1360—Maryland Public Ethics Law—Regulated Lobbyists—Reporting Requirements**

**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, I am Delegate Mary Lehman, representing District 21 in Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties, and I am the primary sponsor of HB 1360. I thank the Committee for the opportunity to present this legislation and respectfully ask for a favorable report.

HB 1360 addresses a fundamental gap in Maryland's system of government transparency: the absence of any public disclosure of what lobbyists are doing during the 90 days when the General Assembly is in session. Under current law, lobbyists must file activity reports only twice a year—in May, after the session has ended, and in November. The reports covering the January-through-April legislative session are not due until the last day of May. By that point, the General Assembly has adjourned, key votes have been cast, and bills have lived or died. The public, the press, and frankly members of this body have had no ability during session to see in real time who is lobbying on which legislation or what position their clients have taken.

HB 1360 corrects that. It creates two in-session reporting deadlines—February 15 and March 15—and requires each lobbyist to show which bills they worked on, the position their clients took on each bill, and the identity of the employer on whose behalf they acted. This is a targeted, proportionate, and long-overdue reform.

Maryland's lobbying disclosure framework, created in the mid-1970s, requires lobbyists to register annually with a \$100 fee that has remained largely unchanged for decades and to file semiannual activity reports. The 2001 and 2002 legislative sessions produced substantial amendments to the lobbying law that improved the quality of disclosure but did not alter the fundamental architecture: two reports per year, filed after the fact.

In the 2025 session, Delegate Terrasa introduced HB 1542, a predecessor to this legislation. HB 1360 carries that work forward in the current session with the same core structure: adding in-session reporting deadlines to the existing semiannual framework. The central insight behind both bills is that the timing of disclosure matters as much as its content. A lobbyist's bill-by-bill activity disclosed in May is history. Disclosed in February and March, it is news.

Maryland is increasingly out of step with national standards for lobbying transparency. The nonprofit research organization F Minus compiled a comprehensive fifty-state analysis of lobbyist disclosure laws and awarded Maryland a C-plus grade in its 2024 report—ranking the state seventh in the nation. While that ranking sounds respectable, the grade reflects a troubling reality: Maryland earns high marks for some categories (requiring disclosure of compensation by

client and maintaining a reasonably functional online database) but falls significantly short on what F Minus identifies as “the three keys” to a strong disclosure system: disclosure of lobbyist salaries, disclosure of bills lobbied upon, and disclosure of positions taken on those bills.

Maryland has two of the three—it requires compensation disclosure and bill disclosure—but lacks mandatory position disclosure. HB 1360 closes that gap by requiring position disclosure in the two new in-session reports. The bill thus completes Maryland’s transparency framework and positions the state to achieve the highest tier of disclosure standards.

HB 1360 takes the most practical step currently available to Maryland by ensuring that, during the heart of the legislative session, the public receives two midsession snapshots of who is lobbying on what and in which direction.

The bill adds new § 5-705(b)(4), requiring all four reports to include a list of each matter on which lobbying activity was performed, a description of the lobbyist’s position on each matter, and each bill number or a description of each legislative action lobbied.

For the first time, the public will have access to information about who is lobbying on which bills during the weeks when committee votes are being taken. The F Minus audits have documented instances of lobbying firms simultaneously representing entities with opposing positions on the same legislation. Without bill-level and position-level disclosure during the session, these conflicts are invisible. With the disclosure HB 1360 requires, the same lobbying firm can be seen supporting a bill on behalf of one client and opposing it on behalf of another. This does not prohibit the practice, but it makes it transparent.

The Maryland Ethics Commission’s staff counsel conducts an annual Lobbyist Activity Report Audit following the legislative session. The increase in bill-number disclosure from forty-seven percent in 2024 to fifty-five percent in 2025 is attributable in part to this audit work. HB 1360 gives the Commission two more data points per year per lobbyist with which to conduct compliance review. Importantly, because the in-session reports are filed while the session is ongoing, the Commission will be able to find and correct deficiencies in real time rather than reviewing stale records months after the fact.

Finally, once HB 1360 makes bill-number and position disclosure mandatory in the in-session reports, the Ethics Commission’s system can be enhanced to permit bill-number searching of activity reports and that would allow any citizen or legislator to search for all lobbyists working on a specific bill.

This committee may hear from the regulated lobbying community that HB 1360 imposes an undue administrative burden. I offer the following responses.

**First**, professional lobbyists in Maryland—the individuals and firms regulated by this bill—are compensated at rates that make Maryland’s disclosure requirements look modest by any comparative measure. The top-earning lobbying firm in Maryland reported compensation of approximately \$6.5 million in a recent lobbying year. The top-earning individual lobbyist reported personal compensation exceeding \$3.4 million. For these practitioners, the cost of

keeping a contemporaneous record of which bills they are working on and what position their clients have taken is trivial relative to the size of their compensation.

**Second**, the states that impose more rigorous disclosure requirements—Colorado, Wisconsin, Delaware, and others—have not experienced a collapse of their lobbying industries. Professional lobbying is a high-compensation profession precisely because the individuals and firms that practice it can manage complex, multi-client representations with care and precision. Keeping a record of bill numbers and positions is not a burden that requires more staff, specialized technology, or considerable time. It requires only that lobbyists document what they are already doing.

**AMENDMENT** I am offering a sponsor amendment to the bill that would limit the February 15 and March 15 reports to three specified disclosures: employer identity, bill number, and position. The full § 5-705(b) financial disclosures would continue to apply to the May 31 and November 30 semiannual reports, which cover the same periods with no loss of financial transparency.

If the Committee is concerned about an administrative burden on the in-session reports specifically, the amendment described above—limiting the February 15 and March 15 reports to employer identity, bill number, and position—directly addresses that concern while preserving the full value of the bill’s transparency objective.

House Bill 1360 is a targeted reform. It does not require daily reporting. It does not impose a seventy-two-hour disclosure trigger. It does not fundamentally restructure the existing semiannual framework. It asks, simply, that twice during the ninety days we are in session, every registered lobbyist tell the public which bills they are working on, who they are working for, and where they stand. Nineteen other states require monthly disclosure during session. Delaware delivers weekly lobbying summaries to each legislator’s desk. Colorado posts updated positions within seventy-two hours. Maryland asks for two reports in ninety days. That is not a burden. That is a baseline.

I urge the Committee to report HB 1360 favorably.