

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

House Bill 15: Public Information Act—Public Records—Nonprofit Organizations

February 10, 2026

Position: Oppose

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the protection and advocacy organization for the state of Maryland; the mission of the organization, part of a national network of similar agencies, is to advocate for the legal rights of people with disabilities throughout the state. DRM is a private nonprofit law firm; a hallmark of the protection and advocacy system is its independence from state government. DRM strongly opposes House Bill 15; the bill, if enacted, would treat nonprofits receiving more than \$50,000 annually in state or local funds as state agencies for the purpose of disclosure of information under the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA).

The most basic purpose of the MPIA is to promote government transparency and accountability. As a nonprofit organization, DRM operates under a different legal framework from a public government agency; DRM is governed by a volunteer board of directors and is subject to a host of accountability requirements from its funders. Turning DRM into a state agency under the MPIA would impermissibly expand the MPIA beyond recognition, changing the intent and purpose of the law and extending state power in an unprecedented and likely unconstitutional way. Particularly as nonprofit legal organization tasked by federal law to ensure that the rights of Marylanders with disabilities are protected, DRM must zealously guard the privacy of its clients and the strategic planning and decisionmaking that shapes the organization's individual and systemic legal work.

House Bill 15 does not clearly define which nonprofit organization records would be subject to MPIA disclosure; nor does the bill offer any justification for the \$50,000 threshold. The bill is vague and if enacted, will cause confusion, administrative burden, and, likely, legal challenges.

For these reasons, DRM opposes House Bill 15 and urges an unfavorable report.

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