

## TESTIMONY FOR SB0346

### Civil Actions – Violation of Constitutional Rights (No Kings Act)

**Bill Sponsor:** Senators Waldstreicher

**Committee:** Senate Judicial Proceedings

**Organization Submitting:** One Million Rising Alliance at Leisure World - Indivisible Group

**Person Submitting:** Lynn Yellott, Board Member

**Position:** FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am submitting this testimony in support of SB0346 on behalf of One Million Rising Alliance at LW (MD). We are an Indivisible group, a group of all volunteers.

We are especially concerned about people whose Constitutional rights are violated by an official. Marylanders need to be protected from losing the right to seek redress regardless of whether the violation of rights occurs at a local, state, or federal level. SB0346 is needed because it addresses this hole, regardless of jurisdiction.

It is essential to pass SB0346 so that:

- Legal recourse is expanded sufficiently: The bill defines “law” broadly to include the U.S. Constitution, the Maryland Declaration of Rights, and the Maryland Constitution, ensuring that no loophole exists for state level violations of fundamental rights.
- Justice is available: By authorizing damages, declaratory relief, and injunctive relief, SB0346 provides concrete and meaningful redress—not redress that is only symbolic.
- Financial obstacles are removed: The bill allows courts to award reasonable attorney’s fees and expert witness fees to a prevailing plaintiff. Without this, most Marylanders could not afford to pursue a case.
- There is meaningful incentive for powerful, otherwise unaccountable officials to be held responsible for their illegal and unconstitutional actions.

- Those of us can continue exercising our First Amendment guarantees with less fear of retaliation. We have watched in horror what has happened in Los Angeles, in Chicago, in Minneapolis. SB0346 provides another needed layer of protection to incentivize officials to adhere to the rule of law.

On a personal level, a primary reason my husband and I moved back to Maryland was: we saw the lack of Constitutional protections and the violations of rights committed by officials in the state (WV) where we lived. We tried for years to change the laws to increase protections and hold officials accountable. When our efforts repeatedly failed, we decided to return to Maryland where we knew we would find the history and culture of government for the people rather than government for the select few powerful. Please don't let us down. We look forward to a **FAVORABLE** report on SB0346.

Thank you.

Lynn Yellott

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