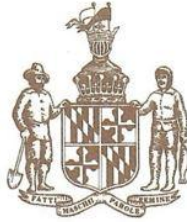


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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am here to present House Bill 1054 and ask for a favorable report.

House Bill 1054 makes a narrow but important change to Maryland law by extending the statute of limitations for certain misconduct by public officials from two years to three years. Specifically, the bill applies to the prosecution of ethics violations under the Maryland Public Ethics Law and criminal malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance in office committed by public officers, including officers of the State, State agencies, political subdivisions, and bicounty or multicounty agencies.

Under current Maryland law, most misdemeanors must be prosecuted within one year of the offense. However, because of the seriousness of misconduct in public office, the law already provides an extended two-year statute of limitations for these types of offenses.

House Bill 1054 simply increases that existing two-year window to three years.

This bill does not create any new crimes, and it does not expand criminal liability. It only provides investigators and prosecutors with an additional year to bring a case when misconduct by a public official is discovered.

Cases involving misconduct in office are often complex and difficult to uncover. They frequently involve internal investigations, audits, document review, and coordination between agencies. In many situations, the conduct is not discovered immediately. It may surface through an internal audit, a whistleblower complaint, or a later review of government activity.

When that happens close to the end of the current two-year period, prosecutors may not have sufficient time to fully investigate and responsibly bring a case. Extending the statute of limitations to three years ensures that serious misconduct by public officials can be properly investigated and, when appropriate, prosecuted.

The fiscal note indicates that this change is not expected to have a material impact on State or local finances or operations.

In short, House Bill 1054 is a modest and practical accountability measure. It recognizes that misconduct in public office can take time to uncover and ensures that prosecutors have a reasonable opportunity to pursue cases that protect the integrity of government.

Extending the statute of limitations by one additional year helps ensure that public officials are held to the highest standards of conduct and that violations of public trust do not go unaddressed simply because the clock ran out.

For those reasons, I respectfully ask for a favorable report on House Bill 1054.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.