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Senator Paul G. Pinsky  
Democrat, District 22  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen St, Annapolis, MD 21401

Delegate Jessica M. Feldmark  
Democrat, District 12  
House Office Building, Room 216  
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Pinsky and Delegate Feldmark:

I write to thank you for your efforts to advance campaign finance reform in the Maryland General Assembly and, specifically, your authorship of the Fair Elections Maryland Act (SB613/HB1125).

As you well know, Maryland is a national leader in its embrace of 21<sup>st</sup> century campaign finance reforms. In recent years, Montgomery County, Howard County, Prince George's County and Baltimore City have all adopted multiple matching fair election reforms. These new small dollar multiple matching regimes amplify the voice and power of everyday citizens, which makes it possible for candidates to run for and win office without having to rely on the wealthy and well-connected.<sup>1</sup> Once elected, they are then more inclined to serve the public interest, not the special interests.<sup>2</sup> These reforms have also been shown to spawn new civic engagement among underrepresented communities, which leads to heightened voter participation as well as a more diverse pool of candidates.

Already, we are seeing the fruits of these revolutionized campaign finance systems in Maryland. For example, a 2019 analysis of the Montgomery County system's usage in the 2018 election cycle found that participating candidates received 98% of their campaign contributions

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<sup>1</sup> See "Public Campaign Financing Is a Bright Spot in the Shadow of Citizens United," Brennan Center for Justice at New York University (January 2020). <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/public-campaign-financing-bright-spot-shadow-citizens-united>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

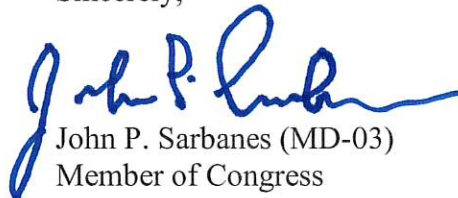
from donors giving less than \$150.<sup>3</sup> Critically, those same candidates were then able to compete with non-participating candidates, raising more on average per contributor once the multiple match was applied.<sup>4</sup>

Your Fair Elections Maryland Act builds on these successes and works to modernize our state's campaign finance system. I applaud the legislation's sensible updates to the gubernatorial public financing system and its adoption of a graduated multiple matching system to amplify the voices of everyday Marylanders. I also support the legislation's expansion of the small dollar matching program to include both the Attorney General and Comptroller races.

Across the nation, Americans of all political stripes are demanding solutions to the pernicious influence of big money in our politics.<sup>5</sup> I have been proud to help support many of those efforts, while also advancing critical reforms at the federal level. In crafting the House-passed For the People Act (H.R.1), I worked with my colleagues to ensure that the bill would include an overhaul of our nation's out-of-date Presidential small dollar financing system and an expansion of the matching system to include Congressional elections. Unfortunately, the legislation is now being blocked in the Republican-controlled Senate.

I am hopeful that as jurisdictions, like Maryland, embrace proactive reforms to fix our democracy, the public will become even more energized around this important systemic change. In this way, your progress is our progress. Thank you again and please consider me an ally in the fight for reform.

Sincerely,



John P. Sarbanes (MD-03)  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> See "Fair Elections in Montgomery County: 2018 Matching Program Encourages and Empowers Small Donors," Maryland PIRG Foundation (September 2019). [https://marylandpirg.org/sites/pirg/files/reports/Fair%20Elections%20in%20Montgomery%20County-%20Maryland%20PIRG%202019\\_0.pdf](https://marylandpirg.org/sites/pirg/files/reports/Fair%20Elections%20in%20Montgomery%20County-%20Maryland%20PIRG%202019_0.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> See "Most Americans want to limit campaign spending, say big donors have greater political influence," Pew Research Center (May 2018). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/08/most-americans-want-to-limit-campaign-spending-say-big-donors-have-greater-political-influence/>