

MARY L. WASHINGTON, PH.D  
Legislative District 43  
Baltimore City

Education, Health, and  
Environmental Affairs Committee

*Chair*  
Joint Committee on Ending  
Homelessness

*Chair*  
Joint Committee on Children,  
Youth, and Families



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**SUPPORT - SB 970**

**PUBLIC ETHICS – DISCLOSURES AND FINES AND PENALTIES – REVISIONS**

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and fellow committee members,

SB970, as amended, is aimed at strengthening the ability of the State Ethics Commission to enforce existing ethics laws and ensure adherence to the standards already established. The bill changes existing Public Ethics Law in the following ways:

- Updates the disclosure requirements related to gifts, tickets, and free admission to events in simply in order to conform these requirements for lobbyists to the new reporting requirements for officials.
- Increases the fines that can be imposed for a knowing and willful violation of lobbying provisions in the Public Ethics Law.
- Requires each member of the General Assembly to report to their respective Presiding Officer on an annual basis whether the member met with the Counsel in their efforts to meet the requirements of the Law.
- Increases late fees that can be assessed by the State Ethics Commission in relation to violations of the Law.

In terms of late fees, those related to financial disclosure filers and those related to lobbyists were last increased in 2014. The fines that can be imposed by the State Ethics Commission on regulated lobbyists who violate the law have not been increased since 2001 and the fines that can be imposed by a court petition have not been increased since 1986.

Again, the goal of these changes to the Public Ethics Law is to increase transparency and deterrence, underscore the seriousness of these violations, and strengthen the enforcement capabilities of the State Ethics Commission. I believe this bill will assist the SEC in upholding existing standards and further demonstrate our commitment to ethics laws in the Maryland General Assembly.

Thank you for considering this bill and I urge a favorable report on this bill

In Partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary L. Washington".

Mary L. Washington, PhD