

BROOKE E. LIERMAN  
Legislative District 46  
Baltimore City

Environment and Transportation  
Committee

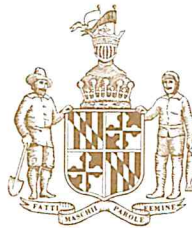
*Chair*

Land Use and Ethics Subcommittee

Joint Committee on Administrative,  
Executive, and Legislative Review

Joint Committee on Ending  
Homelessness

Joint Committee on Pensions



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 311  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3319 · 301-858-3319  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3319  
Brooke.Lierman@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 24, 2020

Re: HB 502: The Equitable Access to Records Act

Dear Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk and Committee Members,

Thank you for your consideration of the Equitable Access to Records Act (HB 502). I am writing to share a recent Capital Gazette article with you about the bill.

As you consider HB 502, please keep in mind that the legislation builds on the important work done by Del. Bonnie Cullison and Sen. Jamie Raskin in 2015 in creating the PIA Ombudsman and PIA Compliance Board. These two entities have now proven to be invaluable in their efforts, yet their value is under-used because of the limited authority given to the Board. A report authored by the Ombudsman (published in December 2019) reviews the efficacy of the public information act in Maryland and recommends updates to the law. This legislation is based on that report. Its key provisions provide that:

- It will be the practice of all public agencies to adopt a policy of proactive disclosure and share documents whenever appropriate or feasible, including responses to past requests.
- The jurisdiction of the PIA Compliance Board will be expanded to review and issue opinions on any PIA disputes that are not resolved through mediation with the Ombudsman. The Act will increase the Board's review to cover disputes including denials of inspection, fee waivers and timely response and lowers the floor for fee disputes from \$350 to \$200.
- The PIA Compliance Board may order custodians to correct violations and also to review custodian requests for relief regarding requestors who make PIA demands that are frivolous, vexatious, or in bad faith.
- Custodians publish an annual report on their PIA requests and responses, to the extent feasible.

If you have any questions about this legislation, please let me know. Thank you for your work!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brooke".