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Ways and Means Committee

Chair
Finance Resources Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

In Support – HB 337 – Election Law – Local Public Campaign Financing – Boards of Education

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and members of the Ways & Means Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 337. Low levels of compensation, intense time commitments, and the necessity to fund and run a campaign can make it difficult to attract and elect strong candidates for county boards of education. The escalating cost of campaigns for public office, too often make money, rather than public support, determine who runs for office. Many board of education races are county-wide, with increasing populations and limited ability to raise funds, making it increasingly difficult for candidates to reach a meaningful number of voters. Private financing can create disparities in the ability of some groups and individuals to communicate their views about politics and government.

House Bill 337 enables counties to implement a system of public financing for elected members of the county boards of education. It expands the county offices eligible for public campaign financing to go beyond legislative and executive offices (current law - Chapter 419, 2013) to include the boards of education. Counties that choose to use this enabling legislation will first need to implement local public financing for the council and executive of their county.

Public financing of elections, including those for boards of education, will help to level the playing field with large donors on the outcomes of local elections. I respectfully ask for a favorable report of HB 337.

Thank you,

Eric Ebersole