



**SB 72: Open Meetings Act – Requirements for State Agencies
and Local Boards of Elections (Maryland Transparency Act of 2021)**

Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 2, 2021

Position: FAVOR

Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

We whole-heartedly support this bill, which seeks to increase the transparency of state agencies and local boards of elections. It does this in several ways, including requiring the posting of meeting materials in advance of meetings and requiring the retention of meeting recordings for a specified period of time.

Posting of meeting materials in advance provides notice of the contents of the meeting with sufficient time for interested members of the public to sign up to comment or to submit written comments before the meeting. Retention of recordings enables the public to hear the actual discussions that took place during the meeting, not just the summaries provided in the minutes.

We would also like to comment that the State Board of Elections meetings held during the pandemic have been the most transparent ones ever conducted in the 15 or so years we have been attending them. The teleconference format enables working people to attend virtually without taking time off during the work day to travel to Annapolis, and the current teleconference software makes it far easier to see and hear each person who is speaking, which was usually difficult even when attending the meetings in person. We would strongly encourage the SBE to continue meeting in this format even when the pandemic is over.

At a time when public trust in government in general and in elections in particular is at an all-time low, increasing the transparency of government operations will help to restore confidence in our institutions of government.

Sincerely,

Robert Ferraro and Rebecca Wilson, Co-Directors
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