

TESTIMONY OF COMPTROLLER PETER FRANCHOT

Support – Senate Bill 6 – General Assembly – Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 4, 2021

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to provide testimony in **support** of **Senate Bill 6 – General Assembly – Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office**. I would like to thank Senator Lam for sponsoring this legislation.

Senate Bill 6 proposes a constitutional amendment that will change the procedure for filling vacant seats within the General Assembly. Currently, local central committees possess the power to recommend and appoint new legislators instead of the citizens of the district. Under Senate Bill 6, power is returned to the people by allowing them to choose their own representatives through a special election.

The delegates and senators who comprise the Maryland General Assembly don't work for their local central committees. Nor do they work for the Democratic or Republican parties. They work for the taxpayers who pay their salaries and expenses, and that's who should have the privilege of choosing their elected leaders.

I am particularly concerned **how** these appointments have been made. Central Committees often quite literally take votes in backrooms, hidden away from the public. Most recently an appointee was chosen by four of seven committee member votes to represent a district that is home to over 117,000 Marylanders.

It's time to do away with these secretive, un-democratic insider elections that are often already determined and are decided by a handful of votes. Vacancies should be filled by a special election to restore the fundamental principles of democracy. For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request a **favorable report** for Senate Bill 6. Thank you for your time and consideration.

###