

February 4, 2021

**Testimony on SB 374****Campaign Finance - Special Session of the General Assembly - Contributions Prohibited Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs****Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 374, which would extend the current campaign finance prohibition on the Governor, Lt. Governor, Comptroller, and legislators during a regular session to also apply during a special session.

Maryland's prohibition on fundraising during the legislative session is a critical one. This provision creates a strong bright-line between someone's role as a state elected official and their role as a candidate. It also provides reassurance to the public that when an elected official is deciding on policy in Annapolis, it is their constituents – not their donors – that are influencing those decisions.

The current prohibition on elected officials accepting donations during the legislative session is designed to help build a firewall between influence-seeking donors and state elected officials' priorities. This prohibition should also apply during a special session.

While imperfect at combatting that influence, the prohibition does help to alleviate concerns that state elected officials actions during the General Assembly session, including during a special session, are shaped by donor priorities by ensuring that those donors' most powerful means of influence – campaign donations – are disallowed until after the years' decisions are made.

Because SB 374 will strengthen the current prohibition, we urge a favorable report.