



TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEES

SB 358 – Public Financing Act – State Senate and House of Delegates

Position: Support

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The League of Women Voters believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should: enhance political equality for all citizens; ensure maximum participation by citizens in the political process; protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns; provide voters sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices; ensure transparency and the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections; enable candidates to compete equitably for public office; ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public; and combat corruption and undue influence in government. The League continues to look for ways to limit the size and type of contributions from all sources as a means of combating undue influence in the election process.

This bill would amend the Public Financing Act to expand the list of candidates authorized to receive public contributions from the Fair Campaign Financing Fund to include candidates for State Senator and member of the House of Delegates. Public funding of campaigns promotes equality for all citizens and protects representative democracy by leveling the playing field for candidates, regardless of their personal wealth or connections.

Additionally, this bill incentivizes candidates for statewide office in Maryland to seek widespread support among their constituents by providing maximum levels of matching funds for small private contributions, with decreasing levels of matching as the size of the individual contributions increase.

The League of Women Voters urges a favorable report on SB 358.