



Written Testimony in Support of the Public Advocate Act of 2022 (HB 152)
House Health and Government Operations Committee – Hearing, January 25, 2022

Launched in 2017, Our Maryland is a nonprofit, multi-issue online platform for promoting a just and sustainable future for all Marylanders. Our Maryland currently has close to 55,000 Facebook followers and 14,000 email subscribers. Public access, engagement and confidence in our government are a top priority for Marylanders. Our Maryland urges support for the Public Advocate Act of 2022 (HB 152), because we believe it would strategically advance these vital public interests.

With rising distrust in government, it is important that Marylanders have their own elected advocate to monitor complaints, fight corruption and propose solutions to make their government and tax dollars more accountable and effective. In recent years, Marylanders have seen malfeasance and lack of transparency around unemployment insurance, public transit (canceled Red and mismanaged Purple Lines), unusable or spoiled Covid tests, attacks on a public health whistleblower, use of new technology undermining the state's Public Information Act, prosecution of the Governor's former top aide for fraud and misuse of public funds, a national watchdog's ethics complaint against the Governor for personal real estate conflicts related to state infrastructure decisions, and state legislative and local resignations around public corruption charges. Because of limited capacity and structural gaps in governance, these oversight and accountability issues often fail to get investigated and systemic problems linger without being adequately addressed.

The proposed Act is nonpartisan. Historically, Maryland gained a bad reputation when two of its governors – one from each major party - faced public corruption prosecutions. It is time now for Maryland to lead the nation with responsive and accountable government.

Larry Ottinger, Our Maryland President, 7004 W. Greenvale Pkwy, Chevy Chase, MD 20815