

February 22, 2022

Testimony on HB 1093
Election Law – Candidate Expenditures – Caregiving Services
Ways and Means

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of HB 1093. This legislation would expand the allowable uses of campaign funds to include reasonable expenses for childcare incurred by the candidate as a direct result of campaign activity.

As more parents of young children begin to run for elected office, we are thankfully seeing increased public awareness of the additional barriers they face to getting on the ballot. The job of campaigning is generally family unfriendly. The long and often unpredictable hours candidates keep in order to attend events, meet with constituents, and spread their message don't always match up with local school and childcare center schedules. Additionally, the exorbitant costs of running a competitive campaign - which depending on the office sought can run into the millions of dollars – can be debilitating to candidates from working families, especially when the average cost of childcare per child per year has reached upwards of \$8,000 across the U.S.¹

Finding quality childcare is expensive and difficult, putting an extra burden on low-income candidates and single parents, who statistically are more likely to be women. Political candidates often end up having to take a leave of absence or even quitting their jobs altogether in order for office, options that are not feasible for candidates that come from or support low-income or single parent families. The effect of this is that it is often wealthy white men who are more likely to run for and win positions in local, state, or federal offices – this in turn impacts the likelihood that we will see more policies that help women and children.

It is important to note that on the federal level, candidates have been able to use campaign funds for childcare expenses following a 2018 ruling by the Federal Election Commission. Since then, 15 states have passed legislation to codify this practice into law, and 6 other states including Maryland have bills allowing the practice pending in their legislatures.

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/10/campaign-funded-child-care-helps-moms-run-for-office-meet-the-woman-making-it-happen.html>

Normalizing childcare expenditures as part of a campaign is a good step towards making elected office more inclusive and accessible for more people in diverse circumstances. For those reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report.