



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

[www.womensdemocraticclub.org](http://www.womensdemocraticclub.org)

**House Bill HB0366 – General Assembly Vacancy – Political Party Central Committees -  
Procedures  
Ways and Means Committee – February 21, 2023  
FAVORABLE**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic clubs in our state with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC has formed an *ad hoc* committee, Advancing Democracy in Maryland, to examine and recommend actions that empower voters, achieve equality of voice and representation, and ensure the responsiveness of government institutions. We are guided by many of the recommendations of the report, [Our Common Purpose: Reinventing Democracy for the 21st Century](#), issued in 2020 by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship. The report endorsed 31 recommendations along with six strategies to "help the nation emerge as more resilient by 2026, the nation's 250th anniversary."

The ADM Committee will support legislative and executive branch directives that advance these aims. While we are all Democrats, we believe that advancing democracy is a non-partisan effort.

**WDC urges the passage of HB0563.** This bill is an essential vehicle for ensuring our democracy remains strong. It establishes requirements that ensure those who fill mid-term vacancies for Senator or Delegate in the General Assembly are selected fairly and impartially.

The bill requires that political party Central Committees make public all applications to fill a vacancy in the General Assembly, mandates public notice of the vacancy, requires the Central Committee to hold public meetings, and prohibits candidates who are also members of the Central Committee from voting for themselves. By creating these requirements, the bill allows all eligible voters to be aware of the selection process while ensuring that Central Committee members who apply for the vacancy do not have an advantage over non-Central Committee members by virtue of their vote. Central Committees are too small to allow such an advantage when a General Assembly vacancy needs to be filled.

By creating a transparent and unbiased process, HB0563 ensures that no individual or group can manipulate the outcome of the selection process. As a result, HB0563 is a critical bill that will increase public engagement in Central Committee processes; and greater engagement will lead to less biased processes. All Marylanders should support this legislation to keep our democracy strong and to ensure that our Central Committees hear from the people who will be represented by the legislator they choose.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to democracy!



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**We ask for your support for HB0563 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Respectfully,

Diana Conway  
President

Liza Smith  
Advancing Democracy in Maryland Committee