

COURTNEY WATSON
Legislative District 9B
Howard County

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Oversight Committee on Pensions

Vice Chair, Transportation
and the Environment



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 7, 2023

HB-213 Election Law - Local Public Campaign Financing - Boards of Education

SPONSOR: Delegate Courtney Watson

POSITION: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chairman Atterbary, Vice Chairman Wilkins, and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to present House Bill 213 which is enabling legislation.

In any jurisdiction that has established a system of public financing, HB-213 extends to the jurisdiction the opportunity for Board of Education candidates to enroll in the system. To date, the following localities have already installed an election fund option for elected office positions at the county and/or state level: Baltimore City, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties. These programs have proven successful, with jurisdictions across the state looking to develop similar government-matching financing programs.

In the 2022 Howard County election, the Board of Education campaign expenditures ranged from \$45,000 - \$80,000. The cost of running for office, even at the local level, has become a staggeringly expensive endeavor.

Those interested in serving their communities on the Board of Education should not be discouraged from seeking office because of a lack of resources. By establishing a Citizens Election Fund, it breaks down barriers for highly-qualified individuals, passionate about serving their constituencies through public service. Moreover, a public financing option encourages candidates to develop grassroots campaigns and allows the democratic process to thrive by creating a diverse crop of candidates less reliant on special interest and outsider money.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 213.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill. I am happy to answer any questions.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Courtney Watson".

Delegate Courtney Watson
Howard County District 9B