

February 7, 2023

Testimony on HB 213
Election Law - Local Public Campaign Financing - Boards of Education
Ways & Means

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in favor of HB 213 which would expand the public campaign finance systems currently allowed in the counties to also cover elected members of the county Board of Education.

The Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 included language that allowed counties to create public campaign funding programs that would allow candidates for county council and county executive to run for office with the support of their communities. The Montgomery County Council quickly passed their own program by unanimous vote in 2014, successfully using the program during the 2018 and 2022 election cycles - and in the most recent cycle, Montgomery County saw a diverse mixture of twenty incumbents and first-time candidates qualify for and opt into the program, with three of those candidates being successful in their bids for office. Howard County, Prince George's County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County have also established public campaign financing programs of their own.

These programs have been gaining popularity in Maryland for a simple reason: particularly since the *Citizens United* decision, Americans across the political spectrum feel that our campaign system is disconnected from the populace, and that LLCs and wealthy individuals render regular Marylanders' voices meaningless in the current campaign finance environment. Small dollar public funding programs, on the other hand, lift up regular Marylanders' voices, and empower those with community-supported ideas who may not have connections to deep-pocketed interests.

Common Cause Maryland stands for the amplification of regular Marylanders' voices in every election for every office, including local Boards of Education. For these reasons, we request a favorable report on HB 213.