

BILL NO: House Bill 434
TITLE: Persons Providing Lobbyist Compensation – Statement of Political Contributions – Exemption for Nonprofits
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
HEARING DATE: February 6, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

House Bill 434 would exempt qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations from having to file a disclosure statement with the State Board of Elections (SBE) for spending at least \$500 to compensate one or more regulated lobbyists. The bill would take effect July 1, 2024. The Women's Law Center of Maryland wholeheartedly supports this bill as we are a qualified 501(c)(3) and are already required to make such disclosure.

As a lobbyist for our organization, I, the author of this testimony, must register with the State Ethics Commission (SEC) and am considered a regulated lobbyist under the Maryland Public Ethics Law, because I am paid specified expenses and/or received specified compensation for the purpose of influencing legislative or executive action, as set forth under § 5-702 of the General Provisions Article. As a regulated lobbyist I am subject to various reporting requirements and other provisions under the Ethics Law. The Fiscal Note to this bill lists all the things with which I must comply.

House Bill 434 would simply exempt the 501(c)(3) for which I work from having to file as well. 501(c)(3) nonprofits are already prohibited from making political contributions, and should not have to also make this disclosure. The lobbying Ethics Laws adequately monitor the requirements.

For these reasons, the Women's Law Center of Maryland urges a favorable report on House Bill 434.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.

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