

Legislative Testimony (online submissions) 5-15-2023

Timestamp	Full Name	City	Zip Code	Are you representing yourself?	Who are you representing?	Legislation	Position	Remarks	Attachment
05/15/2023 11:30:24	Zachary Taylor	Washington	20005	No	American Recyclable Plastic Bag Alliance	Bill 19-23aaa: Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Act (amended)	Oppose		YES
05/15/2023 9:50:38	Alan Lang	Pasadena	21122	Yes		Bill 19-23aaa: Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Act (amended)	Oppose	I oppose Bill 19-23. While I support the idea of reducing plastic waste, I believe that forcing retailers to charge at least 10 cents per paper bag and specifically record that cost in the receipt is just another unnecessary increased cost of business. Retailers will incur costs to reprogram their terminals to record the paper bag use. Since many grocery stores have switched to self checkout, how will they record paper bag use? Already, these stores are facing increased shoplifting from customers who do not scan all of their items. How will they ensure that customers record all or any of the bags used? I dislike the concept that by recording the number and price of bags used, that it will eventually coerce customers to use reusable bags. Please vote against this bill unless it is amended to remove the mandatory recording of papers bags used on the receipts.	
05/15/2023 7:57:10	Ann Rubin	Annapolis	21409	Yes		Bill 19-23aaa: Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Act (amended)	Support	It's common knowledge that plastic is bad for the environment, the waterways and the water life, and for our health. As a waterfront town, this is especially poignant. Please follow Baltimore's lead in passing this Bill. Plastic bag bans work! Very few people bring reusable bags into grocery and other stores. The only way to change their behavior is to ban the use of plastic bags. While it may be initially be a "chore" to bring your own bag, ultimately it will become second nature. We all have to do our part in protecting our planet.	
05/14/2023 18:35:22	Louis Bertolotti	Hanover	21076	Yes		Bill 19-23aaa: Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Act (amended)	Oppose	My name is Louis Bertolotti and I recently moved to the area with my wife. We live at the northern edge of the country, and greatly enjoy everything it has to offer. I unfortunately will not be able to attend this week's meeting, but wanted to note our strong opposition to the plastic bag ban bill. We live at the juncture of Baltimore, Howard, and Anne Arundel counties. When we were looking at places to live between Baltimore and DC, we specifically chose to live on this side of the county line because it felt more livable. While there are many reasons we felt that way, one was the fact that we were not nickel and dimed upon checkout at the grocery store. It seems like a small thing, but it can have a large impact on the perception of a place. Although I understand the good intentions behind this bill, I strongly advise more time be taken to assess public opinion on this issue. Local government can sometimes work as an echo chamber. Although this policy may sound like a good idea, I can assure you that there is strong opposition from the majority of people in the county, most of whom are not even aware that this is up for debate. We are all already drowning in reusable bags, and use them as often as we can. Taking away an individual's choice of bag is not right. Furthermore, depending on the type of reusable bag, these options may need to be used up to *7, 100 times* to be truly environmentally friendly alternatives to a conventional plastic bag. We all want to protect the environment. Adding in an unnecessary mandate on the backs of business owners around the county is not the right solution. It is a solution in search of a problem. I urge you: please take the time to speak with everyday residents of the county before taking this extreme action. This is not the correct course of action for our county.	
05/12/2023 8:25:06	Georgia Lightfoot	Arnold	21012	Yes		Bill 19-23aaa: Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Act (amended)	Support	It's about time! I'm disappointed to read about the delayed effective date.	
05/11/2023 8:40:37	Shawnta Jackson	Laurel	20724	Yes		Bill 19-23aaa: Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Act (amended)	Oppose	While I appreciate the intent of the bill, I think it could be more comprehensive and considerate of businesses and their practices. Businesses should have the option of choosing to charge their customers 10 cents per paper bag. Passing expenses to customers should not be mandated. There is no consideration for biodegradable materials in this bill. As a AA County resident, I'd rather pay 10 cents for a biodegradable plastic bag rather than 10 cents for a paper bag which caused the demolition of more trees unless these paper bags are made from 100% recycled paper. What's missing is this County are recycling centers and options for residents to recycle. For example, I take my plastic bags to Target for recycling, not a County provided drop off box. Please consider this factor for future consideration. Thank you.	
05/09/2023 9:08:05	JoAnne Zoller	Glen Burnie	21061	Yes		Bill 19-23aaa: Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Act (amended)	Support	Thank you to the County Council for such close attention to the Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Bill so that it meets the needs of all for full implementation. I have only one more comment to add: Don't let this wonderful and impactful bill get "stuck in the trees" like a plastic bag. I urge you to pass this bill as amended now to reduce a significant source of cumbersome plastic waste in our county for years to come! Let's do it!	
05/06/2023 21:10:54	Claire Greiner	Severn	21144-1566	Yes		Bill 19-23aaa: Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Act (amended)	Oppose	This bill as written does not account for people's real lives. Have you never had to make a last-minute shopping trip? Do you manage to have every single item needed for the day 100% of the time? Must be nice, being perfect, or even just neurotypical. Why is there a provision to STOP offering paper bags/biodegradable plastic carrying bags? I understand the need to reduce plastic waste, but biodegradable bags should not be banned with them. In addition to adding food safety risks with reusable bags, you aren't going to reduce plastic waste as much as you think- people who reuse the bags for pet waste, wastebasket liners, etc. will end up purchasing other plastic bags for the task. Save your energy and enforcement capacity for bigger problems.	
05/06/2023 17:17:35	Rebecca Forte	MD	21146	Yes		Bill 19-23aaa: Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Act (amended)	Support	On May 19, 2022 Time Magazine published an article with the headline "U.S. Plastic Recycling Rates Are Even Worse Than We Thought." From that article we learned that less than 5% of US used plastics actually get recycled by plants at the US and abroad. From the Anne Arundel County Department of Public Works, I've learned that the situation is even WORSE for plastic bags. Plastic Bags cannot be recycled with the other plastic items because they break the recycling machines. Based on these facts, it should not come as any surprise that most plastic bags end up in the ocean as part of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch- or worse, in the stomachs of fish, whales, and sea turtles. Locally, Mr. Trash Wheel, a solar-powered vessel, has collected more than 700,000 plastic trash bags from the Inner Harbor since 2014, according to the Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore. If using reusable bags is all that is needed to help change this trajectory then that is a very simple and easy thing to do. Similar legislation already exists in Montgomery County, Howard County, Baltimore City, Takoma Park, Chestertown, Westminster, Easton, Baltimore County, Washington DC, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, New York, Oregon, and Vermont. It is time for Anne Arundel County to join them and show that we too care about our local rivers, our Chesapeake Bay, and the oceans beyond by passing this bill. Thank you.	
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05/15/2023 10:57:32	Morgan Drayton	Odenton	21113	No	Common Cause Maryland	Bill 25-23: Public Campaign Financing	Support		YES
05/15/2023 10:44:57	Emily Scarr	Baltimore	21218	No	MaryPIRG Citizens Lobby	Bill 25-23: Public Campaign Financing	Support		YES
05/15/2023 9:24:30	Alan Lang	Pasadena	21122	Yes		Bill 25-23: Public Campaign Financing	Oppose	I oppose Bill 25-23, Public Campaign Financing. At a time of high inflation, increasing crime, and poor student test results, spending tax payer money to raise turning for office seems to be a frivolous use of public money. The bill does not even document the need for this legislation. As with other legislation presented this spring, the only justification seems to be that the other Counties have such a program, so we should have one too. The Office of Budget estimates that this legislation will cost tax payers between 2 and 3 million dollars and could cost up to \$8 million. I maintain that this money would be better spent on Police, First Responders or Teachers, if spent at all. We could be increasing the salaries of existing police, first responders, or teachers or hiring more instead of spending money on political candidates. Please vote against this bill.	
05/15/2023 7:15:17	Kurt Svendsen	ARNOLD	21012	Yes		Bill 25-23: Public Campaign Financing	No Position	Please see attached 1-page PDF	YES
05/14/2023 22:11:58	John Jasen	Pasadena	21122	Yes		Bill 25-23: Public Campaign Financing	Support	See attached	YES

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05/12/2023 13:38:36	Abbie Ellicott	Severna Park	21146	Yes		Bill 25-23: Public Campaign Financing	Support	Dear AACo Council representatives: I strongly urge you to support the creation of a public election fund by supporting Bill 25-23. I believe it is critically important that we pass this bill so that ALL of our citizens can access the funds they need to effectively run for office. I wish we lived in a world in which the amount of campaign money a candidate has doesn't strongly influence who gets elected, but of course this is not the case. With our current system, candidates who support the interests of wealthy individuals and corporations are much better equipped to run an effective campaign and to get elected. Once elected, these candidates are beholden to the interests of their campaign donors and thus may not be working for the good of all of their constituents. This is completely counter to the principles of a democracy. The success of having campaign funds available to all has been demonstrated by other MD counties and across the country: they result in a more diverse slate of candidates and voter-centered campaigns. For all of these reasons, I urge you to support the creation of this fund. Thank you.	
05/12/2023 13:26:05	Michelle Koul	Severna Park	21146	No	Maryland WISE Women	Bill 25-23: Public Campaign Financing	Support	I am writing as a member of WISE, a local group of women that came together in 2017 to work for the good of our communities. I am asking the council to come together and support this non-partisan legislation. We understand that for many candidates, accepting money from special interests is a means to an end, and hard to refuse when everyone is doing it. However, we hope that you agree that a fair donor fund is a step towards improving the way our elections work, and will incentivize candidates to focus on the individual voter. In 2018, many first time candidates had money that came primarily from individual donors, rather than special interests. But the overall amounts were small compared to the incumbents. With name recognition and established contacts the incumbents had larger accounts, but on a percentage basis, fewer individual donations. My thought at the time was that I would much rather support a candidate beholden to me, a constituent, but how could these new candidates ever compete with that much money? I held out hope that voters would look at campaign donations as a means to judge the candidate's commitment to the individual constituent - and many voters did - but the financial gaps are just huge and hard to overcome. The bottom line is, a fair election fund will incentivize candidates to forgo special interest money - and ultimately result in a government more accountable to us. In addition, it has been shown that a fair election fund encourages people to make those small donations in the first place. And citizens who donate are more likely to stay involved, volunteer for campaigns and ultimately turn out to vote. Please support so more people like you all will run!	
05/08/2023 23:24:50	Renee Layscock	Severna Park	21146	Yes		Bill 25-23: Public Campaign Financing	Support		
05/01/2023 11:36:02	David Morsberger	Davidsonville	21035	Yes		Bill 13-23aaa: Licenses & Registrations – Special Event Permit (amended)	Oppose		YES

April 3, 2023

Councilman Peter Smith  
Chairman  
Anne Arundel County Council  
44 Calvert Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Plastic Retail Bag Ordinance

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Pickard, and members of the Council:

On behalf of the American Recyclable Plastic Bag Alliance (ARPBA), which represents U.S. plastic bag manufacturers and recyclers, I write to share our concerns regarding a proposal to ban plastic retail bags in Anne Arundel County. As families continue to struggle with inflationary pressures driven by the lingering challenges from the pandemic and supply chain disruptions, this proposal will make grocery bills even more expensive and negatively impact the hard workers in Maryland who are employed by the plastic bag industry.

ARPBA and its members share your commitment to sustainability. That's why we are often the first to say, "if you don't need a bag, don't take one." Despite the best of intentions, carryout bag regulations generally fail to meet their underlying sustainability goals while opening the door to negative consequences for shoppers, stores, and even the environment.

Lifecycle assessment after lifecycle assessment of various carryout bags has reached the same conclusion: the plastic retail bag is the option with the fewest environmental impacts when disposed of properly. These American-made products are not only frequently reused—[up to 77% of the time according to research](#)—but they can also be recycled through the convenient store takeback program.

A ban on these recyclable plastic retail bags would require businesses to replace products that are made and recycled right here in Maryland with products that are commonly imported overseas from some of the world's worst polluting countries. In fact, one plastic bag manufacturer's facility in Elkridge employs over 175 Marylanders.

In comparison, most imported, stitched bags are still commonly made from plastic and cannot be recycled in the United States. The same lifecycle assessments mentioned above find that these products require substantially more reuses to offset their larger environmental impacts, which include larger emissions profiles.

Bag bans not only force consumers to use less sustainable products, but they also create other headaches for shoppers and stores. In New Jersey, reporting from the New York Times tells of shoppers [accumulating unsustainable volumes](#) of these stitched bags. For some shoppers struggling with sky-high inflation, they have [resorted to stealing grocery store shopping baskets](#) instead of paying the costs for these bags. There have been reported increases in shoplifting, driving at least one retailer to [shutter their brick-and-mortar location](#).

On the other hand, plastic retail bags are easily recyclable, low-cost, highly reused, and the preferred option for many businesses. Switching to paper or reusable bags is costly for retailers, especially small businesses and grocery stores that operate on razor-thin profit margins. With the increased costs for paper bags due to supply chain disruptions and shortages, reporting shows some large grocery stores [estimate greater than a](#)

[\\$250,000 increase in costs per year](#) when a plastic bag ban is implemented. Inevitably, these costs get passed down to consumers in the form of higher prices, which impacts low-income communities the most.

For many struggling consumers, a ban would create significant new costs at checkout when they forget their bags, which may be more likely for those who rely on public transit, work multiple jobs, or otherwise face challenges when it comes to shopping for necessities. Whether it's a \$10 cotton or canvas bag or a \$1-2 stitched handles plastic bag, like the kind commonly available at the checkout counter, these costs can add up quickly in the absence of affordable options for businesses and consumers.

Across the country, ARPBA consistently hears that communities must “do something about bags” to address litter, waste, or marine debris. However, bans on plastic retail bags have never been shown to have a meaningful impact on any of these very real challenges. The reason is simple: plastic retail bags are not major contributors to litter, waste, or marine debris.

[Data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) show that combined, all plastic bags and sacks account for three-tenths of one percent (0.3%) of all municipal solid waste. The plastic retail bags targeted by this law account for an even smaller fraction of this amount. Litter surveys consistently find that plastic bags account for a minuscule fraction of items collected at litter clean-up. An independent, nationwide litter [survey conducted by Keep America Beautiful found](#) that plastic retail bags accounted for just six-tenths of a percent (0.6%) of items collected at clean-ups on roadways and waterways.

In short, an ordinance to establish a ban on low-cost, recyclable plastic retail bags represents a regressive burden that would negatively affect families and businesses across the state already struggling with significant inflation, while doing nothing to advance sustainability.

Instead of moving forward with a ban, ARPBA believes the Council should consider alternative approaches that promote better consumer education around the recycling of plastic bags and other films. Doing so can promote a more circular economy, limit demand for virgin materials, and encourage more mindful consumer behavior. As you and your colleagues continue to evaluate this matter, ARPBA and its members stand ready to serve as a resource to answer any questions about our industry, its Maryland presence, or how these policies have created challenges in other jurisdictions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Zachary Taylor  
Director  
American Recyclable Plastic Bag Alliance

CC: Vice Chairman Allison M. Pickard  
Councilmember Amanda Fiedler  
Councilmember Julie Hummer  
Councilmember Shannon Leadbetter

Councilmember Lisa D. B. Rodvien  
Councilmember Nathan Volke

# Maryland PIRG

Emily Scarr, Maryland PIRG Director

Bill No. 25-23: AN ORDINANCE concerning: General Provisions – Public Campaign Financing

Position: Support

Monday, May 15th, 2023

*Maryland Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) is a non-profit, non-partisan public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members in Anne Arundel County and throughout the state. One of our top priorities is our Democracy for the People Campaign to curb the impact of big money on our democracy and empower everyday people.*

There is no doubt that our democracy is in a fragile state. Faith in government has dramatically declined, as has voter participation and civic engagement. Hyper-partisan politics, gerrymandering and corporate influence have pushed our federal government into stalemate. Small donor public financing of elections is not a silver bullet to solve our democracy's problems, but it's a good start. By creating alternatives to the traditional funding model for elections and encouraging more participation we can disrupt the stranglehold money has on our democracy, and Maryland counties are leading the nation to do so.

In 2013, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 which made it possible for Maryland counties to build small donor campaign finance programs locally. Since, Montgomery County, Howard County, Prince George's County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County have all established these new campaign finance systems, and Montgomery County and Howard County have successfully run their first elections using the new system.

**These programs are popular, effective, and bipartisan.** Larry Hogan used the state's public financing program in his successful run for Governor; Republican candidate for Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman used the program in his 2022 run in Howard County; and, Baltimore County's fair elections program passed with bipartisan support.

**This bill is modeled after the success of similar programs in the state and country, with adjustments to meet needs of Anne Arundel County races.** A Fair Elections program will be better for candidates and elected officials, better for the public, and better for Maryland.

We believe that in Anne Arundel County, the amount of money your family makes should not determine the volume of your voice in our elections. But the rise of corporate and large campaign contributions has forced elected officials and candidates to be increasingly dependent on these donors, giving them less time to hear from and serve their constituents.

This bill creates a voluntary program which enables candidates to run for office with small donations from their constituents and remaining competitive with those who accept large and corporate contributions. This serves the dual purpose of reducing corporate and large donor campaign spending and re-engaging the community in the electoral process. And with a Fair

Election program in place, we hope to expand opportunities to run for office, so candidates of all backgrounds can run based on the strength of their ideas, not access to money.

**Here's how it would work:**

- Candidates seek contributions from the people they would represent in office, and the size the average person can afford to make, with contributions maxed out at \$250.
- Once they have reached qualifying thresholds for money raised and donors reached to prove viability, the County provides matching funds to boost those small contributions. This helps ensure these candidates can remain competitive with those taking big checks. This system keeps big money out and encourages candidates to seek small donations from everyday people.
  1. Participating candidates have to reject all large and corporate contributions and only accept small contributions to their campaign.
  2. Once they qualify, they will receive limited matching funds for the small contributions from County residents, with the smallest donations receiving the highest match.
  3. This encourages candidates to focus their campaigns on city residents of all income levels and enables them to remain competitive with candidates not participating in the program.

In 2019, [Maryland PIRG Foundation released a report](#) which found that Montgomery County's Fair Elections program showed strong results in its first use. The report looks at data from 57 candidates for county office, 35 of whom participated in the program and 24 qualified to receive matching funds.

**Key findings:**

- Candidates who qualified received nearly twice as many donations from Montgomery County residents than those not participating in the program (850 vs 434).
- Candidates participating in the program received an average contribution of \$86 compared to \$1,145 for non participating candidates.
- Candidates running for county council seats were able to use the small donor system to run competitive races. The average contribution, including matching funds, for candidates participating in the program was similar to the average contribution for candidates accepting large contributions (\$306 vs \$292).

You have an incredible opportunity to empower Anne Arundel County residents in our elections and build a democracy for the people. I hope you take it.

**We respectfully urge support for Bill 25-23.**



## Anne Arundel County Fair Elections Program (Bill No. 25-23)

Threshold to Qualify for Small Donor Matching Program		
	County Executive	Council
Number of donations	500	75
Amount of donations	\$40,000	\$7,500
*Must forgo contributions greater than \$250 and only accept contributions from individuals (no money from corporations, unions, PACs, etc.). Multiple contributions from one person cannot exceed \$250.		

Match Ratio	County Executive	Council
First \$50	6 to 1	4 to 1
Second \$50	4 to 1	3 to 1
Third \$50	2 to 1	2 to 1
Final \$100	Accepted, no match.	
*Only contributions from Anne Arundel County residents are matched.		

	County Executive	Council
Match Cap	\$750,000	\$125,000
*Once the cap is reached, candidates can continue to raise donations from individuals of \$250 or less but will not receive any matching funds. Multiple contributions from one person cannot exceed \$250.		

	Donation	Match	Total Con.
County Exec	\$50	$\$50 \times 6 = \$300$	\$350
County Exec	\$100	$(\$50 \times 6) + (\$50 \times 4) = \$500$	\$600
County Exec	\$150	$(\$50 \times 6) + (\$50 \times 4) + (\$50 \times 2) = \$600$	\$750
County Exec	\$250	$(\$50 \times 6) + (\$50 \times 4) + (\$50 \times 2) + (100 \times 0) = \$600$	\$850
County Council	\$50	$\$50 \times 4 = \$200$	\$250
County Council	\$100	$(\$50 \times 4) + (\$50 \times 3) = \$350$	\$450
County Council	\$150	$(\$50 \times 4) + (\$50 \times 3) + (\$50 \times 2) = \$450$	\$600
County Council	\$250	$(\$50 \times 4) + (\$50 \times 3) + (\$50 \times 2) + (100 \times 0) = \$450$	\$700

Assumptions
The goal is <u>not</u> to ensure a candidate using matching can outspend all competitors; the goal is to stay competitive with enough funding to get the candidate's message out.

Support: Bill No. 25-23, AN ORDINANCE concerning: General Provisions – Public Campaign Financing

This is a good bill. It empowers more options for viable campaigns for county executive, and for the county council seats.

This bill enforces limitations, which include:

The amount received is governed by the candidate's popularity (see 1-12-106.

Disbursements of public contribution, section A, 1 and 2);

Hard limits on expenditures (1-12-106. Disbursements of public contribution, section A, 3);

A return of unused funds (1-12-107. Use of public contribution, D );

and heavy restrictions on outsized funding by corporations, wealthy donors or organizations (1-12-109. Applicant and participating candidate restrictions).

Almost literally, this bill makes it possible for an average person of modest means to consider running. The likelihood of this empowering potential candidates from our marginalized communities cannot be easily ignored.

In a worst case scenario, assuming three parties, and a full slate of candidates, the expenditure every four years would have a maximal cost of \$4,875,000. Spread out over four years of the county budget -- for a grand total percentage of 0.07% of the county budget.

The costs are worth the potential gains.

## Testimony on Bill No. 25-23 - Public Campaign Financing Fund

First, I need to preface my testimony as I did when I testified *against* the County Council's approval of Resolution No. 1-22 to place on the ballot a Charter amendment to require a Public Campaign Financing Fund. That is, ***I support the general idea of this type of campaign financing reform.***

What I was opposed to then was (1) the process of bypassing the review of this specific proposal by the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) which was in the midst of reviewing other Charter amendment proposals, and (2) the concept of authorizing a newly created Commission to calculate an amount necessary to fully fund a public campaign financing system cost for a fiscal year, and requiring that amount shall be included in the annual budget and appropriation ordinance.

So, I am pleased to see that Bill 25-23 is a less drastic legislative approach as opposed to a Charter amendment. Although it is disheartening that this legislation was not even the subject of a Council Worksession. I am also pleased to see that this legislation (unlike the "blank check" type of Charter amendment previously proposed) includes the idea of a ***spending cap.***

Yet, even that spending cap betrays the inherent bias of the elected officials and their appointees that oversaw the creation of this legislation. It clearly lacks the perspective of citizens and tax-payers because the proposed spending cap ***focuses on the participating candidates rather than the bottom-line fiscal impact to County taxpayers.***

The Fiscal Note states: "If all candidates in Anne Arundel County's 2022 primary and general elections had utilized the proposed public financing system to its maximum potential, the cost would have been approximately \$8.4 million." The Fiscal Note does go on to say that "actual disbursement of these funds are anticipated to be significantly lower" and provides a guesstimate of \$2 – 3 million for the next election cycle. But, I think that if you vote for this system, then you ought to be willing to support the cost ***as if your ideal scenario is realized.*** That is, you should be willing to stand-up for the \$8.4 million cost of this system which assumes all candidates use it.

Personally, I think \$8.4 million is too expensive and risks being geographically inequitable. I would wholeheartedly support this Bill ***if the proposed "spending cap" also limited the total amount spent by the Public Campaign Financing Fund itself*** in an objectively determined, formulaic, manner. I suggest something like this:

- The total spending cap for a given election cycle is two times the proposed limit for each contested seat. That is, ***the most expensive scenario under this cap is \$3.25M<sup>(1)</sup>.***
  - $\$750K \times 2 = \$1.5M$  for the County Executive, and  $\$125K \times 2 = \$250K$  for each Council District.  
Note: This cap is more than the Fiscal Note estimate of \$2 – 3 million (so, shouldn't be a concern)
- The total spending cap for a given election cycle is enforced by the Controller ***separately*** for each of the contested seats in a manner like that described in section 1-12-106 (D). That is:
  - If there are more than two certified candidates for a given seat and at least two of them receives a minimum of \$150K in qualifying contributions, then the Controller would need to proportionately reduce the public contribution to each certified candidate for that seat.

This additional spending cap would not only eliminate the uncertainty of maximum fiscal impact, it would also significantly de-politicize the role of the newly created Public Campaign Financing System Commission.

Sincerely,

Kurt Svendsen, Arnold, MD

<https://sites.google.com/view/aacountycitizenshare>

<sup>(1)</sup> Most expensive scenario: All eight seats are contested, each seat has two or more certified candidates, and at least two certified candidates receives a minimum of \$150K in qualifying contributions.

## Testimony on Bill 25-23 General Provisions – Public Campaign Financing

**Position:** Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports Bill 25-23 which would establish a Public Campaign Financing Fund in Anne Arundel County.

Public campaign financing programs are important tools that lift the voices of regular Marylanders in the light of ever-increasing influence of wealthy interests on our politics. These programs work by incentivizing candidates to participate in a new system of fundraising, where large contributions and contributions from corporations and PACs are sworn off, while small-dollar donations from regular residents of Anne Arundel County are amplified so that even the smallest donation can have a huge impact. To qualify, candidates must receive a threshold number of contributions from a threshold number of contributors. This process ensures that only candidates with viable community support can gain access to the public funding program, thus protecting public money.

Montgomery County, Howard County, Prince George's County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County have all established similar programs, with [Montgomery County successfully](#)<sup>1</sup> using its program for the first time in 2018. The results in Montgomery County were incredibly heartening. Incumbent and first-time candidates from a diverse array of backgrounds used the program to run for office, raising money by meeting with constituents instead of reaching out to a cadre of wealthy individuals, corporations, and political PACs.

These programs also have bipartisan support. Former Governor Larry Hogan successfully used a similar program, the Fair Campaign Financing Fund, the first time he was elected. We also see both Democrats and Republicans opting in and qualifying in both Howard and Montgomery County this election cycle. This is also the case in other states: In Arizona, candidates from both parties use their Citizens Clean Elections program [at almost equal rates](#).<sup>2</sup> Connecticut's program helps Republicans compete more effectively<sup>3</sup> in a state that is heavily Democratic.

These programs remain popular amongst Marylanders for a simple reason: particularly since the *Citizens United* decision, they 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. Last year's charter petition effort – raised after the Council's failure to pass a Charter resolution that would have established a program within the county - revealed that more than 5,000 Anne Arundel County citizens would have liked the chance to weigh in on introducing a campaign finance program in Anne Arundel County.

Ultimately, public campaign financing programs increase participation on both sides of the campaign – voters donate because they know that even a little bit can go a long way, and this donation is an investment that more tightly connects them to the campaign, raising interest. Candidates, freed from having to dial-for-dollars with wealthy donors, spend more time among their constituents, getting a clearer picture of the problems facing regular Marylanders instead of just the wealthy few.

One of the most important aspects of public campaign financing programs is that, particularly when campaigns are getting vastly more expensive each cycle, they allow regular people to run on the power of their ideas instead of having to rely on wealthy interests.

A public campaign financing program in Anne Arundel County would allow residents with lower incomes a way to participate and have an impact on their elections that they are currently shut out from. Additionally, it would further incentivize candidates to reach out to the residents, as their small contributions could be matched for larger contributions, giving Anne Arundel's more marginalized residents a greater voice in the direction of the County.

Common Cause Maryland supports Bill 25-23 because it would lay the foundation for the creation of a public campaign financing program that could greatly amplify the voices of Anne Arundel County residents. We urge you to vote favorably on the legislation.

Morgan Drayton, Policy & Engagement Manager  
Common Cause Maryland  
[Mdrayton@commoncause.org](mailto:Mdrayton@commoncause.org) | 443-906-0442