

ANTONIO P. SALAZAR
10240 Little Brick House Court
Ellicott City, MD 20142

Howard County Council
Council Chairperson Jon Weinstein
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 20143-4300

Dear Council Members and Chairperson Weinstein:

I am writing to recommend that you withdraw Council Bill No., 30-2017 that seeks to establish a voluntary Citizens' Election Fund.

The Bill, in its current state, is poorly written, confusing, and replete with arbitrary and illogical limitations. In sum, in its current state, it does not and will not meet its self-professed goals of promoting access to elected office or preventing large donors from having "undue" influence in government. It will only confuse potential candidates and add costs to the County's budget.

I offer the following comments and hope that you withdraw this version of the Bill:

1. In lines 5 and 6 of the second "Whereas" clause, I recommend deleting the phrase "and to prevent large donations from having undue influence in government". This Bill does nothing of the sort.
2. Change the words "ordinary people" in line 10 of the third "Whereas" clause to read "County Residents". The Bill doesn't limit donations to "ordinary people" – whoever they may be in a County where the median household income exceeds \$110,000 as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for 2015.
3. The \$250 contribution limit is too generous. That limit should be much lower since recently reported surveys show that nearly ¾ of Americans ("ordinary people," I presume) don't have \$1,000 in savings and couldn't fund a \$500 emergency expenditure.
4. The limits of \$750,000 and \$95,000 for public funds are also far too generous and will prove, when combined with the administrative costs, to be costly to the County. If candidates raise the maximum amounts allowed, the County will be paying out \$1,225,000, plus the administrative costs associated with the dedicated "staff" for the funds.
5. With the listed "limits" given the funding scheme, those figures hardly limit a candidate's fundraising ability.
6. One example of the poor drafting and arbitrary and illogical limitations can be found in Section 10.301(B)(2). That Section provides that an applicant can only accept contributions or loans from the named "family members". Among the named "family members" are: the applicant candidate, a spouse, parent or sibling. Including the "candidate" in the list of "family member" is odd drafting at best. Moreover, as drafted, the Section puts certain candidates at a disadvantage. Namely, those applicant candidates with no siblings (i.e., an only-child), whose parents have died, and happen to be single (no spouse). Under the current structure their initial contribution limit appears to be \$6,000. In other words, \$6,000 less than the \$12,000 that would be available to married candidates and those whose parents are still living. That difference makes no sense. Similarly, the limited

listing of “family members” is at odds with the intent of promoting ordinary citizen participation. After all, ordinary citizens are the ones most likely to seek funding not only from immediate family, but also from in-laws, cousins, etc. The exclusion of donations from such extended family members doesn’t make sense.

7. In Section 10.301(B)(1)(I) the phrase “Eligible Contributions from an individual” is redundant since an “Eligible Contribution” by definition in Section means a donation from an “individual”. This phrasing begs the question of whether there are other types of “Eligible Contributions”?
8. The Bill does nothing to address the problem of “bundling” of contributions and the undue influence that comes from that practice. “Bundling” being the process whereby one person obtains/solicits a number of limited, yet qualifying donations on behalf of the candidate. In this scenario, a party seeking influence can simply, instead of donating say \$4,000 at one time, make a \$250 donation and then collect similar checks from 15 friends. They save \$3,750! They still have influence! This Bill does nothing to address that situation.
9. There should be a date set by when the Director declares that there will be a “Fund Insufficiency” and that date should be early in the process. If there is a funding insufficiency, candidates that relied upon the promise of public funding should be relieved of the limits or be permitted “make-up” non-limited contributions. It is not fair to put the risk of fund insufficiency on the candidates that relied upon their government to fund their campaigns.
10. As I read the Bill, Candidates nominated by petition or by non-principal political parties do not get funding during the primary period. That limit isn’t fair it is discriminatory. It may not be legally permissible to only fund the primary candidates of “principal political parties and not those of “minor” parties when public funding is involved. Given the importance of name recognition, the failure to making funding available to candidates nominated by petition or by small parties, certainly puts them at a disadvantage, which could dissuade citizens from participating. That hardly seems fair for a public funding bill in County with a large number of unaffiliated voters.
11. The interest rate paid by withdrawing candidates should not be the rate set on tax arrearages. The rate should be the federal funds rate.
12. Contribution restrictions include groups, organizations, etc., but do not include, other forms of entities such as limited liability companies, trust, partnerships, etc. All such entities and organizations should be included.
13. The Commission should be deleted; it is unnecessary. The Amount of the fund can be set by the County Executive and County Council from time to time based upon the County budgetary situation at the time. If a Commission is established, members should only be “unaffiliated” voters.
14. The Bill should contain a sunset clause. If the public doesn’t avail itself of the public funding option, a future council should have the guaranteed opportunity to decide how to handle the situation.
15. The entire scheme should be simplified. This scheme will only disadvantage candidates who choose the public funding option.

Thank you for considering my views.

Tony Salazar

Sayers, Margery

From: Joanne Heckman <joanneheckman@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 19, 2017 5:22 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Testimony on CB30-2017

Testimony on CB30-2017, An Act establishing a voluntary Citizens Election Fund

To the County Council

From The People's Voice, represented by Joanne Heckman

April 19, 2017

Please vote unanimously to pass CB30 and establish the Citizens Election Fund. Implementing the Citizens Election Fund as soon as possible will allow us to publicize the provisions of the Fund and encourage candidates to run for office in the next election. Especially in the 2018 elections, when so many positions will be open, it is crucial for us to recruit the best candidates in Howard County. The Fund will allow more citizens to consider taking on the financial burden of running a campaign and serving the county.

Joanne Heckman

11174 Wood Elves Way

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(410) 740-8320

for

The People's Voice

3205B Corporate Court

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Sayers, Margery

From: Chiara D'Amore <chiaradamore@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 19, 2017 3:10 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Please Vote Yes on CB30

Dear Howard County Council Members,

My name is Chiara D'Amore and I live in Ms. Sigaty's district. I am writing to ask you to please vote yes on CB30.

I am proud of Howard County for voting Yes on Question A in November. Now we need the County Council to move forward in creating a Citizens' Election Fund, which would match small donations and require participating candidates to reject large or corporate donations. The existence of a Citizen's Election Fund would encourage more people to participate in the election process and allows candidates to be judged on the strength of their ideas, not their willingness to please the ruling class and corporate donors. This is particularly important when it comes to environmental issues, which are top of mind for me as an environmental scientist, educator and parent.

As Maryland League of Conservation Voters Executive Director Karla Raettig explains, "At the heart of the fair elections movement is the desire to reclaim our democracy and have elected officials who are both accessible and accountable. We can't make progress on the pressing environmental issues of our time without a level playing field for candidates who share those values." I completely agree and am counting on the Howard County Council to move forward on creating the Citizens' Election Fund in a timely manner. Howard County really has the chance with CB30 to lead the way in a political era in which corporate profits and the greed of the 1% are trampling on efforts to protect the public good.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Chiara D'Amore

*Chiara D'Amore, Ph.D.
President, The Community Ecology Institute
Founder, Columbia Families in Nature*