

Introduced _____
Public Hearing _____
Council Action _____
Executive Action _____
Effective Date _____

County Council of Howard County, Maryland

2026 Legislative Session

Legislative Day No. 12

Bill No. 68 -2026

Introduced by: Deb Jung
Co-Sponsored by: Christiana Rigby

SHORT TITLE: Public Ethics Law – Confidentiality of Complaints – Technical Corrections

TITLE: AN ACT amending the Howard County Ethics Code clarifying the confidentiality of certain complaints submitted to the Ethics Commission; clarifying the procedures if information relating to certain complaints are publicly disclosed; making technical corrections; and generally relating to the Howard County Public Ethics Law.

Introduced and read first time _____, 2026. Ordered posted and hearing scheduled.

By order _____
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

Having been posted and notice of time & place of hearing & title of Bill having been published according to Charter, the Bill was read for a second time at a public hearing on _____, 2026.

By order _____
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

This Bill was read the third time on _____, 2026 and Passed ___, Passed with amendments ___, Failed _____.

By order _____
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

Sealed with the County Seal and presented to the County Executive for approval this _____ day of _____, 2026 at ___ a.m./p.m.

By order _____
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

Approved by the County Executive _____, 2026

Calvin Ball, County Executive

NOTE: [[text in brackets]] indicates deletions from existing law; TEXT IN SMALL CAPITALS indicates additions to existing law; ~~Strike-out~~ indicates material deleted by amendment; Underlining indicates material added by amendment.

1 **Section 1. *Be It Enacted*** by the County Council of Howard County, Maryland, that the Howard County
2 *Code is amended as follows:*

3 *By amending:*

4 *Title 22 -. "General Provisions"*

5 *Subtitle 2 -. "Howard County Public Ethics Law"*

6 *Section 22.203 -. "Administration."*

7 *Section 22.206 -. "Financial disclosure statements."*

8
9 **Title 22 - General Provisions**

10 **Subtitle 2. Howard County Public Ethics Law**

11 **Section 22.203. Administration.**

12 (n) (1) Any person may file a complaint with the Commission alleging a violation of any of the
13 provisions of this subtitle.

14 (2) A complaint shall be in writing and under oath; and

15 (3) The Commission may refer a complaint to the County Solicitor, or other legal counsel
16 if appropriate, for investigation and review.

17 (4) The Commission may reject without further proceedings any complaint which it deems
18 to be plainly frivolous or which, assuming the facts alleged were true, does not state a
19 violation of this subtitle.

20 (5) The Commission may dismiss a complaint if, after receiving an investigative report,
21 the Commission determines that there are insufficient facts upon which to base a
22 determination of a violation.

23 (6) If there is a reasonable basis for believing a violation has occurred, the subject of the
24 complaint shall be given an opportunity for a hearing conducted in accordance with the
25 applicable County Rules of Procedure.

26 (7) A final determination of a violation resulting from the hearing shall include findings of
27 fact and conclusions of law.

28 (8) Upon finding a violation, the Commission may take any enforcement action provided
29 for in section 22.208 of this subtitle.

1 (9) (i) After a complaint is filed and until a final finding of a violation by the Commission,
2 all actions regarding a complaint are confidential.

3 (II) INFORMATION RELATING TO A COMPLAINT, MAY NOT BE DISCLOSED BY THE ETHICS
4 COMMISSION, STAFF OF THE ETHICS COMMISSION, THE COMPLAINANT, OR THE
5 RESPONDENT.

6 (III) IF INFORMATION RELATING TO THE COMPLAINT IS DISCLOSED BY THE
7 COMPLAINANT, THE COMMISSION MAY DISMISS THE COMPLAINT WITHOUT FURTHER
8 ACTION BY THE COMMISSION.

9 (IV) IF, AFTER THE FILING OF A COMPLAINT, AND UNTIL FINAL CONCLUSION OF THE
10 MATTER BY THE ETHICS COMMISSION, THE COMPLAINANT, THE RESPONDENT, OR ANY
11 REPRESENTATIVE OF EITHER PARTY, MAKES ANY PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING THE
12 COMPLAINT OR PUBLISHES ANY INFORMATION RELATED TO THE COMPLAINT, SUCH
13 DISCLOSURE SHALL BE CONSIDERED AS A FORMAL WAIVER AS TO THAT PERSON'S RIGHTS
14 OF CONFIDENTIALITY DESCRIBED HEREIN AND MAY SUBJECT THAT PERSON TO
15 SANCTIONS.

16 ~~[[ii]]~~ (v) A finding of a violation is public information.

17 (10) The Commission may adopt additional policies and procedures related to complaints,
18 complaint hearings, the use of independent investigators and staff, the use of witness
19 and document subpoenas, and cure and settlement agreements.

20
21 **Sec. 22.206. Financial disclosure statements.**

22 (g) *Candidates to be Elected Officials.*

23 (1) Except an official or employee who has filed a financial disclosure statement under
24 another provision of this section for the reporting period, a candidate to be an elected
25 official shall file a financial disclosure statement each year beginning with the year in
26 which the certificate of candidacy is filed through the year of the election.

27 (2) (i) A candidate to be an elected official shall file a statement required under this section:

- a. In the year the certificate of candidacy is filed, no later than the filing of the certificate of candidacy;
 - b. In the year of the election, on or before the earlier of April 30 or the last day for the withdrawal of candidacy; and
 - c. In all other years for which a statement is required, on or before April 30.
- (ii) The initial financial disclosure statement shall include the preceding calendar year through the date of the certificate of candidacy filed with the Board of Elections for Howard County.

(3) A candidate to be an elected official:

- (i) May file the statement required under subsection (g)(2)(i)(A) of this section with the County Board of Elections with the certificate of candidacy or with the Commission prior to filing the certificate of candidacy; and
- (ii) Shall file the statements required under subsections (g)(2) ~~[(ii)]~~ (I)(B) and ~~[(iii)]~~ (G)(2)(I)(C) of this section with the Commission.

(4) If a candidate fails to file a statement required by this section after written notice is provided by the County Board of Elections at least eight days before the last day for the withdrawal of candidacy, the candidate is deemed to have withdrawn the candidacy.

(5) The County Board of Elections may not accept any certificate of candidacy unless a statement required under this section has been filed in proper form.

Section 2. And Be It Further Enacted by the County Council of Howard County, Maryland that this Act shall become effective 61 days after its enactment.