

**Sayers, Margery**

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**From:** Joanne Antoine <JAntoine@commoncause.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 18, 2020 4:21 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Testimony - Howard County CB 7-2020  
**Attachments:** Howard County CB7-2020 - Whistleblower Protection Act.pdf

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Hello,

Please find attached Common Cause Maryland's written testimony in support of CB 7-2020 for the Whistleblower Protection Act. Apologies for submitting this so late, but we ask that our comments be added to the bill file for the hearing this evening.

Thank you for holding this hearing and for your careful consideration of this critical legislation.

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February 18, 2020

**Testimony on Council Bill 7-2020  
Whistleblower Protection Act  
Howard County Council**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports CB 7-2020 which would establish rights and protections for Howard County whistleblowers, enabling them to make protected disclosures as well as ensuring they are protected from retaliation and that their identity be kept confidential.

Whistleblowers play an essential role in our democracy. They are critical in government oversight, helping to detect activities that are not in the best interest of the public, and support efforts to root out government waste, fraud, and abuse. Failure to protect whistleblowers can lead to an ineffective, inefficient, and unaccountable government.

Currently, there are no direct provisions in Howard County law that protect whistleblowers. This lack of protection discourages individuals from stepping up and coming forward with information that could help improve efficiency within local government and reveal patterns of mismanagement and unethical behavior. We believe this leaves Howard County government open to numerous risks and may create a culture that lacks accountability.

CB 7-2020 seeks to address this issue by putting clear policies and protections in place for those seeking to come forward with information. It provides vital protections for whistleblowers in order to foster an environment within Howard County government that is free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. Protecting whistleblowers so that they can come forward knowing there is a complaint process in place to hold supervisors, heads of office or departments, and other appointing authorities accountable for violating their rights.

At a time where other government jurisdictions throughout the state are looking to rebuild trust with their constituents following ongoing stories of abuses from elected officials and others in power, Howard County should be doing all that it can to prevent these similar situations and to encourage individuals to come forward with information that will help reveal activities that may hurt the faith and trust Howard County residents have in their government.

We believe that every citizen has a duty to report the abuses of those in authority, especially within local government. CB 7-2020 ensure Howard County government protects these individuals.

We urge a favorable report.