

March 6, 2013

**Testimony on SB 825 –
Open Meetings Act - Public Body – Definition
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 825, which would clarify the Open Meetings Law to explicitly include subcommittees of the standing committees of the General Assembly.

It has been a long-standing procedure by both chambers to keep subcommittee meetings open to the public. However, the law itself is silent as to whether subcommittee meetings are considered covered by the act, and an Attorney General opinion last summer has created doubt as to whether the law applies or not. It is critical for the legislature to amend the open meetings law to clearly include subcommittee proceedings to ensure that the important decisions made by these bodies cannot be made in secrecy.

An open and transparent government is critical to ensure that special interests do not hold special influence, and for building voter trust and confidence in the political process. Maryland's open meetings law seeks to bring policy decisions to light, and should be as clear and inclusive as possible.

An open government is a well-functioning government; when there is public accountability there is less corruption and more accountability. SB825 is a piece of the solution and we urge a favorable report.

Common Cause Maryland is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to restoring the core values of American democracy, reinventing an open, honest and accountable government that works in the public interest, and empowering ordinary people to make their voices heard.