

COMMON CAUSE DELAWARE TESTIMONY

House Administration Committee
Claire Snyder-Hall, Executive Director
June 15, 2022

Our state budget is now running about \$5 billion a year – and Delawareans deserve to have confidence that all those tax dollars are being well-spent. We need to know that our state’s procurement laws are being followed; and we should be able to trust that our government officials are not misusing public money to enrich themselves, their families or their cronies.

That’s why Common Cause Delaware strongly supports the creation of an Inspector General’s office for the First State. For about two-one-hundredths of one percent (0.02%) of the state budget, Delawareans can have an Inspector General’s office to ensure all those billions are being spent the way they are supposed to be. We can have an office dedicated to searching out waste, fraud, abuse, corruption, and other conduct that is harmful to the public interest – and to helping recover misspent or inappropriately paid funds.

Eleven other states have a state Inspector General to combat waste, fraud and abuse, in addition to a state auditor that supervises the accounting and financial functions of the state. Delaware should join that list. We urge you to vote HB 405 out of committee.

Right now, too many people don’t trust the government and state agencies to do the right thing most of the time. An Inspector General would help restore trust because it would serve as a watchdog, empowered to investigate state agencies if illegal activities or mismanagement are suspected.

Bad behavior by public officials hurts all of us – and it goes further than the financial cost of wasted tax dollars. Waste, fraud and abuse undermines morale and the effectiveness of public agencies, and it limits the ability of government offices to provide services Delawareans need. The Inspector General would work with the Delaware attorney general to stop agency mismanagement and abuse of office – deterrence that will promote ethical and legal behavior over the long run.

Common Cause Delaware, as a non-partisan organization, particularly appreciates that the Inspector General would be independent, non-partisan, and appointed for a set term. Because the position is appointed, rather than elected, the Inspector General will not be a politician, but rather someone who has the qualifications and independence to do the job. Not beholden to either political party, the Inspector General will be able to serve as an impartial watchdog on the public’s behalf.

We are delighted that this bill has bipartisan support. We believe that demonstrates widespread recognition that the creation of an Office of the Inspector General would greatly benefit *everyone* in Delaware.

We urge all members of the General Assembly to consider this bill through the lens of taxpayers and voters – and vote the bill out of committee. Thank you.