

2021 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

The 2021 legislative session was unlike any that we've experienced before. As the Maryland General Assembly moved forward with a hybrid session due to COVID-19, we worked remotely to advance our democracy agenda while working to ensure the public was able to observe and participate in the legislative process. With your help, Common Cause Maryland was able to make significant progress on reforms that strengthen our democracy and meet the public's demand for more accountability and transparency in the state. Thank you for contacting your legislators, signing action alerts, and for helping us watchdog the remote session. We testified on over 100 bills and have included a summary of our top priorities. For more information and additional bills, check out our [2021 legislation tracker](#).

Passed **Failed**

Access to Voting

Value My Vote Act – This legislation expands access to voting and voting information for eligible voters who are incarcerated, requiring each correctional facility to disseminate voter registration forms, absentee ballot applications, and information on voting provided by the State Board of Elections. HB 222/SB 224 (Del. Wilkins, Sen. West)

Strengthened Our Mail-In Voting Process – This legislation establishes a permanent ballot list, providing voters the opportunity to opt into automatically receiving their ballot by mail for each election. It also makes secure and accessible drop boxes available in future elections and requires that ballot request forms be mailed to all eligible voters in the 2022 and 2024 primary. The legislation also requires precinct level reporting and requirement to improve usability of election mail materials.

HB 1048, SB 683 (Del. Wilkins, Sen. Kramer)

Mail-In Voting Enhancement Act -This legislation would have provided common-sense steps to ensure we are ready to meet the demands of the increased interest in our mail-in voting system as well as ensure those needing to vote at home the most are confident in the process. It called for a better tracking system for our mail-in voting process and a process for “curing,” ensuring those who intended to vote are able to have their voice heard in that election. HB 1047 (Del. Wilkins)

Greater Access to Early Voting Centers – This legislation alters the number of early voting centers required in jurisdictions throughout the state, helping to meet the growing demand for early voting and ensuring the centers are placed in locations that are accessible to all voters. HB 745 (Del. Luedtke)

More Time for Early Voting – This legislation establishes an earlier opening time for early voting centers, requiring that locations be open at 7am in all elections. HB 206, SB 596 (Del. Washington, Sen. Washington)

Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office -Altering the procedure for filling legislative vacancies through a constitutional amendment. The Amendment would have required the Governor to declare a special primary and general election to fill the vacancy if it occurs on or before a specified date, - giving Marylanders more of a voice in the process. HB 265/SB 6 (Del. Moon, Sen. Lam)

Student & Military Voter Empowerment Act – This legislation increases access to voter information and the overall participation of students by establishing campus vote coordinators who work to develop campus voter education plans in collaboration with students, ensuring campuses have voter information readily available on their websites, and providing institutions of higher education the opportunity to provide input to local boards of elections as they select polling locations. HB 156/SB 283 (Del. Luedtke, Sen. Elfreth)

Campaign Finance

Maryland Fair Elections Act – This legislation modernizes and funds the existing gubernatorial Fair Campaign Financing Fund, making it similar to the small donor matching system at the local level, and ensuring adequate funding is available to support candidates using the program in 2022 and all future elections. HB 424/SB 415 (Del. Feldmark, Sen. Pinsky)

Public Financing Act - Creating a small donor matching system for General Assembly candidates so that they can run free from the influence of wealthy donors.
HB 536/SB 416 (Del. Acevero, Sen. Pinsky)

Campaign Finance Reports for Business Contributors – Helping easily identify suspicious donations from businesses in our elections by requiring the State Department of Assessments and Taxation to electronically transmit certain lists of registered and forfeited businesses to the State Board of Elections. HB 1352 (Del. Smith)

Maryland Fair Elections Act – This legislation increases transparency in cases where campaign finance entities are in violation of campaign finance law, expanding reporting requirements to include bank statements documenting all expenditures made by or on behalf of the campaign finance entity during the reporting period. HB 1350 (Del. Wilkins)

Transparency and Accountability

Equitable Access to Records Act- Increasing certain penalties for bribery relating to a public employee. It would also prohibit a former secretary of a principal department of the Executive Branch from representing another party for compensation in a matter that is the subject of legislative action, for one year. HB315/SB202 (Del. Lierman, Sen. Kagan)

Anton’s Law – This legislation removes complaint files of police misconduct from the personnel record category under the Public Information Act (PIA), allowing for the disclosure of records covering the investigations of these complaints. This increased transparency will provide an additional and vital layer of accountability to police actions in the state which will help to foster trust with Marylanders. HB 120/SB 178 (Del. Acevero, Sen. Carter)

Maryland Transparency Act of 2021 – This legislation would have significantly increased access to agencies in the Executive Branch and local board of elections meeting processes by requiring that meeting agendas, materials be made available in advance of these meetings online. Also, that meetings be made publicly available by live stream, and that these streams and meeting minutes be archived. HB 344/SB 72 (Del. Korman, Sen. Kagan)

Integrity in High Office Act – This legislation greatly expands the disclosure required by Maryland’s statewide officials. It includes a number of provisions that strengthen our ethics laws, including requiring the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Comptroller, Treasurer, Attorney General, and cabinet secretaries to disclose more

information about their sources of outside income to include companies they have interest in and the subsidiaries of those companies. HB 1058 (Del. Stewart)

Redistricting Reform

Anti-Gerrymandering Act – Amending the Maryland Constitution to require both the congressional and legislative districts to have the same redistricting standards. The legislation would have reformed our broken redistricting process. HB 410, HB 1260 (Del. Malone)

Defeated Effort to Reinstate Prison-Based Gerrymandering – Defeated efforts to repeal the “No Representation Without Population Act” which passed in 2010 which put an end to an unjust practice that distorted the redistricting process and deprived Maryland communities of fair and equal representation. SB 619 (Sen. Edwards)

Other Initiatives

Avert Dangerous Call for a Constitutional Convention - Averting call for a constitutional convention which would place every constitutional right and protection currently available to American citizens in jeopardy. SJ2 (Sen. Pinsky)

Funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities – This bill was supported by our [HBCU Student Action Alliance](#) and ensures that Maryland Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) receive adequate funding, requiring the Governor to include in the annual State operating budget \$57,700,000 to be allocated, establishing the HBCU fund. HB 1/SB 1 (Speaker Jones, Sen. Sydnor)

DC Statehood - As a neighboring state, this bill would have provided Maryland with the opportunity to send a national message that the people of Washington, DC deserve full voting representation in the US Congress and an end to Congressional interference in their local government. Statehood would afford them all of those rights. HJ 5 (Del. Acevero)

