



**Before the Maryland Senate Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee:**

Hearing on SB 592

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Written testimony of:

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My name is Sean Parnell, and I'm the president of the Center for Competitive Politics (CCP), headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia. The Center's mission is to educate the public on the role of money in politics and to protect the First Amendment political rights of speech, assembly, and petition.

CCP is active on both the state and federal level on legislation relating to campaign finance and election law. Our priority is working with policymakers to ensure that individuals and groups are able to participate in the election process without unnecessary restrictions.

Since the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United*, there have been a number of legislative attempts to curtail independent spending in elections. Many of these proposals are unconstitutional and extremely detrimental to political First Amendment rights. Senate Bill 592, however, is a reasonable and appropriate approach to addressing independent spending.

SB 592 mandates disclosure for independent expenditures that appropriately balances privacy rights with reasonable disclosure of money being spent on elections. The careful and clear way the legislation is drafted will likely ensure that groups who wish to get involved in the political process will not face unnecessarily complicated restrictions.

In fact, the legislation correctly takes steps to ensure that smaller, less sophisticated organizations are not unduly burdened by these requirements by exempting organizations that generate less than 500 pieces of mail or phone calls or spend less than \$10,000.

Too often campaign finance legislation that is overly complex does not burden larger organizations that have the finances and infrastructure needed to comply with regulations, but rather discourages smaller organizations from speaking out on important issues. SB 592 takes commendable steps to avoid that.

Similarly, the definitions in SB 592 clarify that only donations made specifically to further an independent expenditure are to be disclosed. This is preferable to other legislative ideas that have been suggested that include disclosing all donations made to an organization that runs independent expenditures, or placing the burden on the individual donor to specify whether or not their donation can be used for independent expenditures.

CCP commends the legislature for writing a clear, straightforward disclosure bill while also cautioning that disclosure requirements beyond the ones outlined in SB 592 would likely be problematic.

I look forward to working with the legislature on this issue and am happy to provide any additional research or testimony.