



## HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

3430 Court House Drive ■

Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■

410-313-2061

Citizens' Election Fund Commission  
[citizenselectionfund@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:citizenselectionfund@howardcountymd.gov)

FAX 410-313-4433

Date: January 11, 2022

To: Rafiu Ighile, Director  
Department of Finance

CC: Dr. Calvin Ball  
County Executive

Opel Jones  
Chair, County Council

Citizens' Election Fund Commission

Through: Diane Zagorski, Chief, Director Designee  
Bureau of Tax & Specialty Services

From: Sue Geckle, Chair  
Citizens' Election Fund Commission

RE: Reconsider Disbursement Request from the Citizens' Election Fund

Dear Mr. Ighile:

On behalf of the Citizens' Election Fund Commission, I would like to thank you for taking your fiduciary responsibility so seriously to ensure that the public funds from the Citizens' Election Fund are disbursed according to code. That there are several possible interpretations of Section 10.306(a)(3)(i) of the code highlighting the need to have that section corrected by legislative action. The Commission has voted to allow me to write on their behalf to the County Executive and County Council to strongly urge them to approve CB 6-2022 as an emergency bill to correct this administrative flaw.

While awaiting corrective action through the legislative process the Commission requests that you reconsider and reverse your decision to withhold matching funds to qualified candidates during the primary election. It is the opinion of the Commission that not releasing funds will harm the program and create uncertainty for candidates wishing to use it, whereas releasing funds does no harm to candidates or the program. The rightful expectation of candidates is that matching funds would be available during the primary for contested races.

The will of the voters and the intent of the previous County Council was to provide public funds to candidates that agree to abide by the rules of the Citizens' Election Fund. Again, we hope you will reconsider your decision and disburse funds to qualified candidates in contested elections in fulfillment of the voter's wishes and the intent of the legislation.



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Should the decision stand to not release funding to the candidates in a timely manner for the primary, this decision would undermine public trust and confidence in the Citizen's Election Fund. It has been clear all along - from the legislative history, to the description of the program provided to voters during the 2016 referendum, to the conversations between this Commission and your office - that these funds were intended and expected to be made available to candidates for use during their primary elections. Reversal of this expectation puts candidates who have made the decision to participate in this program in an untenable position, where they are gravely disadvantaged by opting into a program that was intended to create a level playing field for all. Moreover, the unfortunate public perception has become that this situation is fueled at least in part by petty politics, making insider politics a driving force over a program that was supposed to put citizens at the center of elections. This is a betrayal not just to the candidates who are impacted by this decision but to all the voters who voted to pass Question A. And it threatens not just the viability of the program in Howard County, but the reputation of these programs across the state. If we in Howard County can't act with civility in our elections, which county can?

Thank you in advance for your consideration of the Commission's request. We look forward to you prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Sue Geckle

Chair, Citizens' Election Fund Commission

CC: Kristen Perry, Office of Law  
Amanda Mihill, Office of Law  
Citizen's Election Fund Commission  
County Council