



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup>  
OF MARYLAND, INC.**

**TESTIMONY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
AFFAIRS**

**SB 17 Open Meetings Act – Retention of Minutes and Tape Recordings-Revision**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

**BY: Barbara Schnackenberg, Co-President  
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**DATE: January 21, 2016**

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by among other actions, making public records accessible. This is a core principle for which we have advocated for the over 95 years of our existence since women earned the right to vote.

The Maryland Open Meetings Act, which was enacted 23 years ago, provides that a record be kept of all meetings held by public bodies in the form of either written minutes or a recording of the meeting. Current law requires that such records be kept for at least one year. HB 17 would require that such records be kept for a period of at least 5 years.

The actions of public bodies may have impact long after one year. Citizens need to have access to the official record of such actions to understand the basis for past decisions in order to understand their impact on current circumstances. If the official record may be destroyed after only one year, the basis for earlier decisions will be lost.

We have experienced such loss in studies conducted by our members of decisions made by their local leaders.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on this legislation.