



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®]
OF MARYLAND, INC.**

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

HB 368 - BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS TRANSPARENCY ACT OF 2016

POSITION: SUPPORT

BY: BARBARA SCHNACKENBERG & NANCY SORENG, CO-PRESIDENTS

DATE: FEBRUARY 16, 2016

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that democratic government depends on informed and active participation in government and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by among other actions giving adequate notice of proposed actions. This is a core principle for which we have advocated for the 96 years of our existence.

Maryland's Board of Public Works (BPW), an agency unique among all of the states, protects our state's fiscal integrity and assures that all state expenditures are sound, fair and lawful. State law gives the Governor, with the approval of the Board of Public Works, the authority to reduce, by up to 25%, an appropriation made by the General Assembly through the budget process if the Governor believes that the expenditure is unnecessary. This gives the Board of Public Works tremendous authority in the financial management of state programs. We believe that the use of this power must be subject to public scrutiny. To require that the Director of Budget and Management provide the Board with a 10 day advance notice when a reduction in an appropriation will be considered by the Board is not a burdensome requirement. We also support the requirement that reduction proposals be posted on the Board of Public Works Website and notice of potential reductions be sent to the Legislative Policy Committee and the legislative committees that originally approved the expenditures: B&T and Appropriations.

A public notice requirement similar to what is contained in this legislation was included in 2015 Budget Bill language and it served the public interest well. We support making this a permanent practice and urge a favorable report on HB 368.