



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

**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, HEALTH AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**SB 528 – GENERAL PROVISIONS-OPEN MEETINGS ACT-REQUIRED TRAINING  
AND CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

**BY: BARBARA SCHNACKENBERG AND NANCY SORENG, CO-PRESIDENTS**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 25, 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 giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible. The Open Meetings Act which was first passed in 1992 would meet these criteria if implemented as intended. However, the Act provided no training requirement for those charged with the obligation of carrying out the provisions of the Act.

More than 20 years after passing the Open Meetings Act, the General Assembly passed, in 2013, a training requirement among the provisions of the Act. The Office of the Attorney General now provides an online training course for those charged with administering the Act. Training is also offered through certain organizations concerned with implementing the provisions of the Act. But today there is no way to know who needs the training nor any certification required to demonstrate that those needing the training have actually completed it. HB 250 attempts to correct these insufficiencies.

The findings of the Open Meetings Compliance Board for the last several years suggest that those responsible for carrying out the provisions of the Open Meetings Act still do not always have an accurate understanding of the requirements of the Act. We urge the committee to act favorably on this legislation or to find some way of assuring that the people most in need of understanding the Open Meetings Act actually have the knowledge to conduct meetings appropriately under the law.