



Prince George's County

# FAIR ELECTION FUND

SUMMARY GUIDE

Published by:

Jared DeMarinis, Administrator Maryland  
State Board of Elections

Allen Norfleet, Director  
MD State Board of Elections - Division of Candidacy and Campaign Finance

Stephen J. McGibbon, Director  
Prince George's County, Office of Finance

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## **Maryland Campaign Finance Law**

In 2011, the General Assembly established the Commission to Study Campaign Finance Law, and on December 31, 2012, the General Assembly issued its final report. It recommended that the counties be authorized to establish their own public financing programs for county offices. In 2013, the General Assembly passed, and the Governor signed, HB 1499, the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013, giving county governments the authority to implement a public financing program.

Pursuant to [Maryland Election Law §13-505](#), any county in the State may elect to establish a system of public campaign financing for elective offices in the executive and legislative branches of the county's government. Any program established under this provision is to be administered by the Chief Financial Officer of the County and subject to regulation and oversight by the Maryland State Board of Elections.

Each county shall determine the criteria that candidates must satisfy to become eligible for participation in the program. Participation in a public campaign financing program is not mandatory for candidates; the decision to participate is voluntary and one can only participate if running for a covered county elective office. A county's program may have stricter regulations on campaign financing, contributions, expenditures, reporting, and campaign material than that of State law.

## **Prince George's County Fair Election Fund**

Prince George's County, Maryland's Fair Election Fund Program is a public campaign financing program established to promote and encourage broader access to elected office in the County and prevent large donations from having undue influence in government. The program is intended to enable citizens of Prince George's County to run for office on the strength of their ideas, supported by small donations from ordinary people and matching funds from the Fair Election Fund.

## **The Fair Election Fund Commission**

[Prince George's County Code, Subtitle 10, Division 26, Sec. 10-331](#), established the Fair Election Fund Commission, hereinafter referred to as the "Commission". The Commission consists of five (5) members appointed by the County Council and two (2) members appointed by the County Executive for a 4-year term beginning on May 1. The term of a member of the Commission nominated by the County Executive begins during the first year of a County Council term. The term of a member of the Commission nominated by a member of the County Council begins during the third year of a County Council term.

Each Commission member must be a resident of the County while serving and must be a registered voter. At least one (1) member must represent an organization focused on government reform. A Commission member may not be a candidate for public office during the previous, current, or next election cycle; may not be a lobbyist registered with the County or State; and may not be the Chair or Treasurer for an open campaign account. The Commission must designate a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson from among its members.

The Commission must meet at least once every 90 days during the 12 months preceding a primary election and at least twice a year otherwise. A member of the Commission may not receive compensation for service on the Commission except reasonable and necessary expenses as may be provided in the budget.

By March 1 of each year, the Commission must provide to the County Council an estimate of the funding necessary to successfully implement the public campaign financing program and recommend an appropriation to the Fair Election Fund for the following year.

## **Program Funding Sources**

The Fair Election Fund, hereinafter referred to as the “Fund”, is comprised of the following funding sources:

- any money appropriated to the Fund;
- unspent money remaining in a certified candidate’s citizen funded campaign account that is returned after the candidate is no longer a candidate for a covered office;
- any public contribution returned to the Fund;
- any donations made to the Fund;
- any fines collected due to civil violations of the terms of public campaign financing program;  
and
- any earnings on money in the Fund.

## Important Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Applicant Candidate	A candidate seeking certification in a primary or general election
Campaign Finance Entity	A political committee established pursuant to the Maryland Election Law Article
Certified Candidate	A candidate who is certified as eligible for public campaign financing from the Fund
Citizen Funded Campaign Account	A campaign finance account into which eligible contributions will be received and from which money may be spent in accordance with <a href="#">Subtitle 10, Division 26 of the Prince George's County, Maryland Code of Ordinances</a>
Commission	The Fair Election Fund Commission
Contested Election	Any election, including a special election, in which there are more candidates for office than the number who can be elected to that office
Contribution	The same as defined in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Election Law Article
County Board	The Prince George's County Board of Elections
County Resident	A natural person who resides in Prince George's County
Director	The Director of Finance or the Director's designee
Election Cycle	The same as defined in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Election Law Article
Eligible Contribution	An aggregate donation in a 4-year election cycle from an individual, including an individual who does not reside in the County, that does not exceed the contribution limit set in <a href="#">Subtitle 10, Division 26 of the Prince George's County, Maryland Code of Ordinances</a>
Fund	The Fair Election Fund
Participating Candidate	A certified candidate who has received a public contribution from the Fund during the election cycle
Public contribution	Money disbursed from the Fund to a certified candidate
Qualifying contribution	An eligible contribution in support of an applicant candidate that is: a) made by a County resident; b) made after the beginning of the qualifying period, but no later than the next general election; c) acknowledged by a receipt; and d) not an in-kind contribution of property, goods, or services
Slate	The same as defined in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Elections Law Article
State Board	The Maryland State Board of Elections



## **Election Cycle Timeline and Key Deadlines**

**Distribution Period:** The period during which the County distributes public contributions from the Fund to a certified candidate. The period begins 365 calendar days before the primary election and ends 15 calendar days after the date of the general election\*. See [Prince George's County Code §10-327](#).

**Qualifying Period:** The period during which candidates may submit receipts to the State Board of Elections to become a Certified Candidate. The period begins on January 1 following the last election and ends 45 calendar days before the primary election\*. See [Prince George's County Code §10-322](#).

**Receipt Submission Period:** The period during which a qualified candidate may submit contribution receipts to the State Board to receive public matching distributions from the Fund. Submissions are due no later than 11:59 PM on the date of the primary or general election to be considered for a match.

**Candidate Filing Notice of Intent:** Candidates must file a Notice of Intent to participate in the public campaign financing program with the State Board no later than 9pm on the last Tuesday in February of the election year.

**Candidate Filing Certificate of Candidacy:** Candidates must file a notice of candidacy with the State Board no later than 9pm on the last Tuesday in February of the election year. This is for the candidate to appear on the ballot. See *Section §5-303 of the Election Law Article in the Annotated Code of Maryland*.

\*The County Council may establish a different Distribution and/or Qualifying Period for a special election.

## Election Cycle Timeline and Key Deadlines (2026 Election Cycle)

1/1/2023	2/2025	7/1/2025	2/24/2026	5/16/2026	6/30/2026	On or about 7/30/2026	11/3/2026	11/18/2026	12/31/2026
Start of the Election Cycle	State Board of Elections begins accepting candidacy filings	Disbursements begin for certified candidates	Deadline to file for candidacy and file notice of intent	Deadline to qualify for public campaign financing and apply for certification	<b>Primary Election</b>	Deadline for any candidate not on the general fund ballot to return any unspent funds in the citizen funded campaign	<b>General Election</b>	Final date for public fund disbursements	Deadline to return any unspent funds in the citizen funded campaign account
Qualifying period									
File Notice of Intent									
Establish a citizen funded campaign account									
File for Candidacy with Board of Elections									
Apply for certification with the State Board									
Receipt submission for primary election									
Receipt submission for general election									
Public fund disbursements									

# Chapter 2: Forming and Managing Candidate Committees

## Public Campaign Financing: How to Begin

To become certified in the Fair Election Fund Program, an applicant candidate must be a Prince George's County resident currently running for one of the following offices: County Executive, At-Large County Councilmember, or District Councilmember.

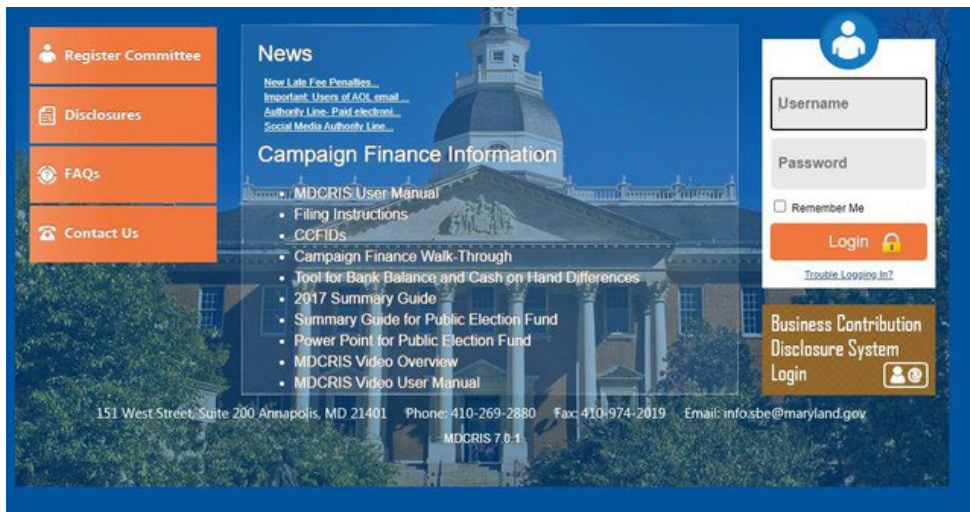
To begin the Fair Election Fund Program certification process, an applicant candidate must:

- ◆ Register a public financing committee via the electronic filing system (MDCRIS) no later than later than 9pm on the last Tuesday in February of the primary election year. Detailed instructions are included in "[How to Register a Public Financing Committee in the Maryland Campaign Reporting Information System \(MDCRIS\)](#)" on page 8.
- ◆ File the Notice of Intent to Qualify with the State Board of Elections. The Notice of Intent to Qualify is automatically generated at the time of establishing a public financing committee.
- ◆ Open a citizen funded campaign account with a bank. The purpose of this account is to receive deposits of all contributions, receive matching public distributions, and make expenditures. **Any other campaign finance account associated with the candidate must be closed or be made inactive during the period the candidate seeks public funds.** Detailed instructions are included in "[Documents Needed to Open a Citizen Funded Campaign Bank Account](#)" on page 12.

# How to Register a Public Financing Committee in the Maryland Campaign Reporting Information System (MDCRIS)

Register a publicly funded campaign committee in MDCRIS by following the instructions below:

- Go to the [Maryland Campaign Reporting System \(MDCRIS\)](https://campaignfinance.maryland.gov) at <https://campaignfinance.maryland.gov>
- At the Home Page, select Register Committee.



- On the following screen, select **Public Financing Committee**



- The next screen indicates that one of the following is required to complete the registration online:
  - Driver's license number
  - Last four (4) numbers of Social Security Number; or
  - Voter registration ID number
- Select **Continue**
- The following information will be entered on the next screen:
  - Election Type
  - Election Year
  - Office Type
  - Office Sought
  - Jurisdiction
  - Party Affiliation
- Once entered, check the box at the bottom of the screen to verify the information and then select **Continue**.

Maryland Campaign Reporting Information System

Public Financing Committee Registration Initial Page

Select which election you will be participating in

Election Type\* -- Select Election -- ▾

Select election year you will be running in

Election Year\* -- Select Election Year -- ▾

Select level of government the office you are seeking

Office Type\* -- Select Office Type -- ▾

Select elective office that you are seeking

Office Sought\* --Select Office Sought-- ▾

Select the jurisdiction of the office sought

Jurisdiction\* --Select Jurisdiction-- ▾

Select the political party that you are affiliated with

Party Affiliation -- Select Party -- ▾

Please verify the Election and Office information before continuing

Continue Clear

- The next screen is the establishment of the public financing committee. Enter the following information and select **Continue**:
  - Committee Name
  - Candidate Information
  - Chairperson Information
  - Treasurer Information
  - Additional Contact Information (optional)
  - Publicly Funded Campaign Account Information
  
- MDCRIS will generate the following documents for the committee to print after the submission:
  - Notice of Intent
  - Statement of Organization

Note: During initial registration, if a campaign account has not yet been opened, please list the campaign account number as 999999999 as a temporary placeholder. Once the account is opened, the account number must be updated.

## State Board of Elections Approval of Committee

After submission and review by the State Board, an email will be sent within 24 hours to the Candidate, Chairperson, and Treasurer with a temporary password to access MDCRIS. If this email is not received within 24 hours, please verify that it is not in a spam folder. If not received, contact the State Board at 410-269-2880.

After receiving the email with the temporary password, each committee member will need to log into MDCRIS, with the assigned temporary password and create a unique personal password. The username to be used during log-in is the email address listed on the Committee Registration.

## How to Edit Public Financing Committee Registration Information

If at any time, the registration information should need to be edited, the committee may log into MDCRIS and follow these instructions:

1. From the menu on the left side of the screen, select **EDIT**
2. This selection will allow you to edit reported information
3. Once the information is edited, select the box on the bottom of the page that states "I certify these changes..." and select **SUBMIT**
4. The system will save the edited information and state at the top of the page if the edited information was saved successfully
5. Select **OK**



## Documents Needed to Open a Citizen Funded Campaign Bank Account

To open a citizen funded campaign account, the following may be requested by the financial institution:

<b>Employer Identification Number</b>	File Form SS-4 with the Internal Revenue Service (Application for Employer Identification Number) <a href="https://www.irs.gov/uac/form-ss-4-application-for-employer-identification-number-ein">https://www.irs.gov/uac/form-ss-4-application-for-employer-identification-number-ein</a> . A personal social security number cannot be used.
<b>Resolution of Authority</b>	Banks should accept the processed Statement of Organization to a newly formed public financing committee by the State Board. This document will be generated after completing registration in MDCRIS.
<b>Personal Identification</b>	As a reminder, once the committee's citizen funded campaign account is opened with the financial institution, this account number <b>MUST</b> be entered in MDCRIS to ensure the timely deposit of publicly matched funds for the certified candidate.



# Chapter 3: Contributions

## Contribution Requirements

Once the public financing committee is established through MDCRIS and the citizen funded campaign account is opened, the candidate can begin collecting qualifying contributions to meet the required contribution amount to become a certified candidate. **No contributions made prior to filing the Notice of Intent will be considered a qualifying contribution.**

### Important reminders regarding qualifying contributions

- All contributions, whether qualifying or eligible, must be deposited into the applicant candidate’s citizen funded campaign account.
- Each qualifying contribution must have a proof of receipt to be submitted to the State Board at the time of requesting a public contribution.
- Each receipt must have the contributor’s name, residential address, and be signed by the contributor directly or by the digital signature method approved by the State Board.
- The signature card name must match the name of contributor to be considered a qualifying contribution.

### Minimum requirements to qualify for public financing for each elective office:

Elective Office	Number of Qualifying Contributions*	Aggregate Total
County Executive	500	\$40,000
At-Large Councilmember	250	\$15,000
District Councilmember	150	\$7,500

## Eligible Contributions

Contributions made to candidates under the public campaign financing program must meet the following criteria:

- An aggregate donation of no more than \$250 per contributor during the election cycle
- Acknowledged by a receipt that identifies the contributor's name, residential address, date of contribution, and signed by the contributor directly or by an approved digital signature

## Eligible Contributions Qualifying for Public Match

Eligible contributions that meet the following criteria may qualify for public match:

- An aggregate donation of at least \$1 but no more than \$250 per contributor during the election cycle;
- Contributed in support of an applicant candidate during the election cycle, after filing the Notice of Intent, and no later than the next general election;
- Contributed by a Prince George's County resident.

## Eligible Contributions NOT Qualifying for Public Match

Eligible contributions that meet the following criteria are permissible, but DO NOT qualify for public match:

- Individual contributions less than \$1
- Contributions made by donors that are not Prince George's County residents
- Up to \$6,000 in contributions, loans, or a combination from the applicant candidate and/or the applicant candidate's spouse

Note: The aggregate value of an individual contributor's donation, including any in-kind donations, may not exceed \$250.

Note: Not all eligible contributions qualify for a public match.

## Impermissible Contributions

An applicant candidate **must not** accept the following contributions:

- A private contribution from any group or organization, including a political action committee, a corporation, labor organization, or a State or local central committee of a political party
- A private contribution from a sole proprietor, LLC, or LLP
- A private contribution or contributions, including in-kind contributions, from an individual in an aggregate greater than \$250 during a four (4) year election cycle
- A loan from anyone other than the applicant candidate or the candidate's spouse
- An individual cash contribution greater than \$100 during a four (4) year election cycle
- An anonymous contribution

## Matching Formula

Covered Office	Matching Ratio for Public Dollars	Qualified Contribution Threshold	Maximum Public Contribution
<b>County Executive</b>	7 to 1	First \$25	\$750,000 per election
	5 to 1	\$26 - \$75	
	1 to 1	\$76 - \$150	
	0	\$151 - \$250	
<b>At-Large Councilmember</b>	7 to 1	First \$25	\$200,000 per election
	5 to 1	\$26 - \$75	
	1 to 1	\$76 - \$150	
	0	\$151 - \$250	
<b>District Councilmember</b>	7 to 1	First \$25	\$75,000 per election
	5 to 1	\$26 - \$75	
	1 to 1	\$76 - \$150	
	0	\$151 - \$250	

The minimum contribution amount for a match is \$1. Contributions less than \$1 will not be matched but would be eligible for consideration as a qualifying contribution.

## Loans and Contributions from Applicant Candidate and Spouse

An applicant candidate and his or her spouse may contribute and/or lend up to \$6,000 each to the applicant candidate's citizen funded campaign account during the election cycle. However, these contributions/loans do not qualify for matching public contributions and do not count toward the certification requirement. Contributions from other family members are subject to all relevant limits and qualification requirements.

Note: Loans and contributions from candidate/candidate spouse must be reported in MDCRIS under "Contributions". See MDCRIS for further instructions.

## Receipt of Contributions

A separate receipt must be obtained from the contributor with the contributor's name, residential address, date of the contribution, and the contributor's signature or digital signature. Without a receipt of contribution, the contribution will not be considered a qualifying contribution or be eligible for matching dollars from the public election fund. **Please see the sample receipt below.**

Electronic Contribution Receipt	
Contribution Received By:	XXX for XXX
Contribution ID#:	X
Contribution Received on:	XX/XX/XXXX
Name of Contributor:	X
Amount of the Contribution:	\$250
Contributor Address:	X
Attestation:	
By typing my name in the e-signature block below, I hereby certify the following:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I understand that State and County law requires that a contribution be in my name and be from my own funds. This contribution is being made from my personal credit or debit <u>card</u> account, billed to and paid by me for my personal use out of my personal funds, is <u>not</u> being reimbursed in any <u>manner</u>, and is not being made as a loan. This contribution is <u>not</u> being made from the funds of a business entity, political action committee, labor organization, or other organization or group.</li><li>I understand that because Candidate X is participating in Prince George's County Fair Election Fund and, I may not contribute more than \$250 to their campaign during the four-year cycle January 1, <u>2023</u> through December 31, 2026.</li></ul>	
E-signature:	<i>John Doe</i>
Resident of Prince George's County:	Yes

## **Bank Checks**

A cancelled check does not qualify as a receipt for matching public contribution purposes. The contributor must sign and provide a receipt as an additional document acknowledging the contribution to be a qualified contribution for public matching.

A qualifying bank check must be printed with a name matching the name on the signed receipt for the contribution:

- If a bank check has two names printed on it and a Prince George's County address, one of the names must be the name of the Prince George's County resident contributor as indicated on the signed receipt.
- The contributor may sign the receipt using the initials of the name printed on the check.
  - For example, if the name printed on the check is John A. Smith, the contributor may sign the receipt as J.A. Smith.

## **Digital Signatures**

A contribution receipt with a digital signature requires that the donor make an affirmative action acknowledging the contribution to a publicly financed candidate. This action must be more than checking a box—a check mark, as evidence of the signature, will not be accepted as a signed receipt for matching funds.

An example of an affirmative action by the contributor would be evidence that the contributor affirmatively typed his or her initials or name at the time of making the contribution to acknowledge an understanding of the law and its requirements for making the contribution. The supporting documentation of a digital signature must be included in the record with a time stamp of when the action occurred.

## **Candidate Certification**

Once the initial registration and contribution requirements are satisfied to become eligible for Prince George's County public campaign financing, all documents to determine the certification of an applicant candidate must be filed with the State Board. This filing must be completed through the MDCRIS platform. The State Board must certify an applicant candidate no later than 10 business days after receiving the following information:

- Receipts for the required number of qualifying contributions and required aggregate dollar amount
- A declaration from the candidate agreeing to follow the regulations governing the use of Fair Election Fund contributions (completed at the time of registration)
- A campaign finance report that includes:
  - Each qualifying contribution received
  - Each expenditure made
  - All receipts associated with each contribution and expenditure; and
- A certificate of candidacy for a covered office

An applicant candidate may only submit one application for certification for any election. If an application is denied, the applicant may resubmit an updated application once if it is submitted before the end of the Qualifying Period.

**The State Board's decision whether to certify a candidate is final.**

If the State Board certifies a candidate, the Board will notify the Prince George's County Office of Finance that public contributions may be disbursed during the Distribution Period.

## **Certification for Elective Office After Previously Qualifying for a Separate Elective Office**

If a participating candidate seeks a County elective office different from the one for which the candidate was certified during the same election cycle, the candidate must:

- Withdraw from candidacy for the first elective office;
- Repay to the Fund the full amount of any distributions received from the Fund; and
- Apply for certification with the Board for the new County elective office

The Board's previously approved contributions for the County elective office from which the candidate has withdrawn can be used towards the certification for the new County elective office.

## **Participation in the Primary Election but not General Election**

If a certified candidate accepts a public contribution during the primary election and wins the primary election, the candidate automatically is qualified for the Fair Election Fund Program for the general election.

If the candidate chooses to withdraw from participation in the Fair Election Fund Program for the general election, the candidate must follow the Board of Election's specific withdrawal procedures. In addition, the candidate must repay to the Fund the full amount of any public contributions received plus interest accruing from the date of withdrawal at the current bank prime loan rate as reported by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

# Chapter 4: Using MDCRIS

## How to File Campaign Finance Reports Through MDCRIS

The MDCRIS can be accessed using any internet browser. The log in for the system is located at [www.campaignfinance.maryland.gov](http://www.campaignfinance.maryland.gov). The system can be accessed by entering the user's email as a username and the personal password created.



## How to Enter a Contribution

- 1 From the left side menu located on the committee's home page, select **Enter Contributions/Transfers/In-kind Contributions**
- 2 Select the appropriate **Filing Period**
- 3 Select the appropriate **Contribution Type** (see below)



## Contribution Type

Contribution Type	Permitted/Not Permitted	Qualifying/Not Qualifying
Candidate Loan	PERMITTED	No
Cash (up to \$100)	PERMITTED	Yes
Check	PERMITTED	Yes
Coordinated In-Kind	NOT PERMITTED	No
Credit Card	PERMITTED	Yes
Electronic Fund Transfer	PERMITTED	Yes
In-Kind	PERMITTED	No
Other Income	PERMITTED	No
Payroll Deduction	PERMITTED	Yes
Raffle or Wheel (Cash)	PERMITTED	Yes
Raffle or Wheel (Check)	PERMITTED	Yes
Raffle or Wheel (Credit Card)	PERMITTED	Yes
Refund/Rebate	PERMITTED	No
Ticket Purchase (Cash)	PERMITTED	Yes
Ticket Purchase (Check)	PERMITTED	Yes
Ticket Purchase (Credit Card)	PERMITTED	Yes
Transfer	NOT PERMITTED	No

4

Select the appropriate **Contributor Type**.

- To be reviewed for public funding matching, **Individual-Matching fund request** must be selected as the Contributor Type. Any other selection will not reviewed for matching.

## Contributor's Information

When entering the contributor's information, a search feature is available by typing the contributor's name in the **Search Contributor Name** field. If the contributor is found in the committee's database, the information can be automatically entered into the contributor information fields by clicking the correct name. This will automatically display the contributor's information in the appropriate fields.

If the contributor's information is not available through the **Search Contributor Name** field, manually enter the contributor's information as follows:

- Full Name
- Address
- County of residence (must be Prince George's County to be matched by public campaign funding)

## Contribution Details

The contribution details must be entered manually. The following information must be entered for each contribution:

- Contribution Date
- Contribution Amount
- Check Number (if applicable)
- If necessary, a comment box is located in the **Contribution Details** section

Select **SAVE** at the bottom of the screen.

Note: If after entering all the contributor information in the appropriate fields, you change the contribution type, the contributor's information will be deleted and must be reentered.

## How to Enter an Expenditure

From the left side menu located on the committee's home page, select **Enter Expenditures and Outstanding Obligations**.

- Select the appropriate **Filing Period**.
- Select the appropriate **Payee Type**.
- When entering the payee's information, a search feature is available by typing the payee's name in the **Search Payee Name** field. If the payee is found in the database, the information can be automatically entered into the payee information fields by clicking on the appropriate Payee. This will display the payee's information in the appropriate fields.
- If the payee's information is not available through the **Search Payee Name** feature, manually enter the payee's Name and Mailing Address in the form.

### Expenditure Details

The following information is required to be reported for each expenditure:

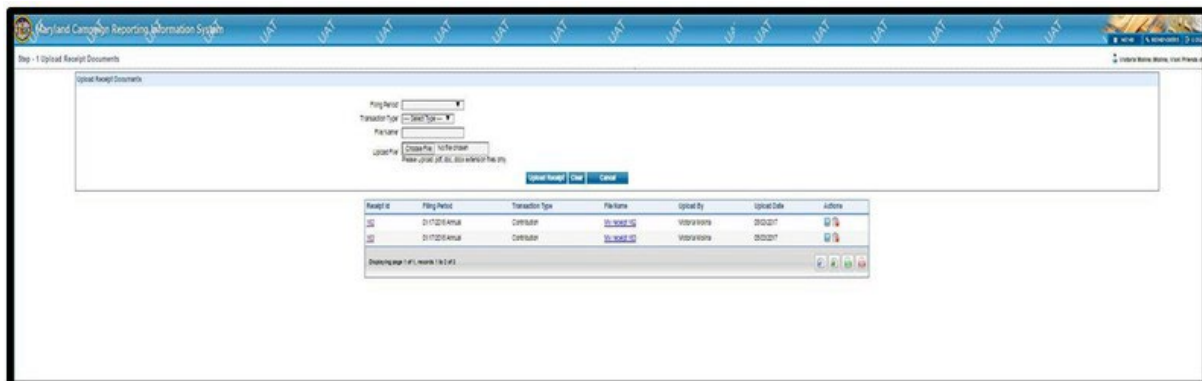
- Expense Date
- Expense Category
- Expense Purpose
- Expense Amount
- Payment Method

Click **Save**.

## How to Link Receipts: A Two Step Process

### STEP ONE: Uploading Receipts

- Scan each receipt as a .pdf
- Log into MDCRIS
- From the left side menu of the committee's home page, select **Receipt Documents**, then, **Step - 1 (Upload Receipt Documents)**.
- The next screen will ask for the following information:
  - **Filing period**
  - **Transaction type** (Contribution or Expenditure)
  - **File Name**
    - You may choose any name for your file, but it may be easier to search for the file later if it starts with the contributor's last name followed by the first name or initial; e.g. SmithJohn.
- Next to **Upload File**, click **Choose File**, locate and select the scanned receipt on your computer, and click **Upload Receipt**.
- Once uploaded, the system will show whether the file was uploaded successfully to MDCRIS.
- The uploaded receipts be listed as shown below.



Note: If a receipt is linked incorrectly and needs to be deleted, click the red X on the right side of the incorrect entry. This will delete the receipt.



## How to Unlink Receipts through MDCRIS

If a receipt was improperly linked to a contribution, a receipt can be unlinked by using the following instructions:

- Select **Filing Period**
- Select **Transaction Type** (Contribution/Expenditure)
- Select **Contributor/Payee Name** (This field has a search feature. Begin typing the contributor's name. Once the name is found, select it.)
- Select **Transaction with Linked Receipt**
- Click **Search**
- Select the contribution that should be unlinked and select **Unlink**.

## How to File a Report through MDCRIS

- From the left side menu located on the left side of the committee's home page, select **Edit/File Pending Transactions**.
- Select the appropriate **Filing Period Name** from the dropdown box, and click **Search**.
- The next screen will display all transactions for the report being transmitted.



Note: From this screen, transactions may be edited by selecting the icon under Edit next to the transaction. Transactions may be deleted by checking the box at the far right side of the transaction, and selecting Delete at the bottom of the page.

## How to File a Report through MDCRIS (continued)

- The system will ask if you want to submit for public funds. Select **OK** or **Cancel**.
  - If **OK**, the system will ask you to certify your public funding request. Select **OK** or **Cancel**.
- The **Cash Balance Screen** asks for your account balance. The amount entered must match the balance in MDCRIS. If the balances do not match, start by adding to the committee's balance any uncashed but reported checks. A good practice, is to balance the MDCRIS account like a checking account.
- If the Treasurer's password is not available, skip over verification of Treasurer. **DO NOT** check the box that states that the Treasurer has verified the entry. In addition, the password box must be empty. If it is empty, there will be no dots inside the box.
- Check that the bottom of screen states that the information is certified and select **Submit**.

Note: If this is your final report, please select FILE CLOSEOUT REPORT. As a reminder, a campaign account must have a \$0.00 balance to proceed with the Final Report.

Note: The beginning transaction date for all reports is the day after the ending transaction date of the prior report. This includes filing any optional public election fund reports. If the committee is new, the beginning transaction date is the date the committee was formed.

## Reporting Requirements

All Reports must be filed using MDCRIS. This system can be accessed at [www.campaignfinance.maryland.gov](http://www.campaignfinance.maryland.gov). Reports for your committee can be filed up to 11:59 p.m. on the filing date deadline. Once your report has been submitted through MDCRIS, an email will be sent acknowledging your submission. Please see the State Board's website for the mandatory reporting schedule.

# Chapter 5: Public Funds

## Distribution of Public Funds

After a review of the submission by the State Board, the Director of Finance for Prince George's County will be notified to deposit the authorized matching publicly funded campaign contribution into the certified candidate's publicly funded campaign account. This deposit will be made within five (5) business days after the Board notifies the Director of the authorized public contribution.

The Board must determine the amount of a public contribution that each participating candidate is to receive based on the amount reflected in the receipts as presented to the Board and the formula for the respective County elective office.

Note: A candidate will not receive matching public funding for

- Contributions made by individuals that are not Prince George's County residents
- A contribution or loan made by the candidate or candidate's spouse

## Distribution of Funds Timing

A public financing committee may seek public funds during the distribution period, which begins 365 days before the primary election and ends 15 days after the general election in which the candidate is participating. The Distribution Period for the November 2026 Election is June 30, 2025 through November 18, 2026.

The Director will process all authorized public contributions by the due date and in the order in which they were received.



## **Maximum Public Contributions**

The maximum public contribution to a certified candidate during an election cycle, including the primary and general election, is:

\$750,000 for a candidate for County Executive

\$200,000 for a candidate for At-Large Council Member

\$75,000 for a candidate for District Council Member

A candidate who wins the nomination after receiving County matching funds may continue to receive matching funds from the County up to the maximum amount during a contested general election.

## **Exceeding Public Contribution Limit**

The Director must not approve a distribution of a public contribution from the Fund to a participating candidate that would exceed the aggregate public contribution limit for that County elective office.

## **Distribution Period Closed**

The State Board, upon notification from the Director that certain authorized public contributions have not been and will not be remitted to the public campaign financing account and that the distribution period is closed, must notify the participating candidate(s) within ten business days from the date of notification from the Director in writing.

## **Primary Election Results**

Within 30 days after the County Board certifies the results of the primary election, a participating candidate who is not certified to be on the ballot for the general election must return any unspent money in the candidate's citizen funded campaign account to the Fund.

## **Withdrawal from Program**

If a candidate chooses to withdraw from participation in the Fair Election Fund Program, the candidate must file a statement of withdrawal with the State Board and the Fair Election Fund Commission.

Additionally, the following criteria apply to public contributions:

- A candidate may opt out of the Fair Election Fund Program at any time before receiving a public contribution.
- If a candidate receives any distributions from the Fair Election Fund and later withdraws from the Program, the candidate must return all Fair Election Fund contribution amounts, plus interest accruing from the date of withdrawal at the prime lending rate (published by the Federal Reserve Board as of January 1 in the year in which the distribution is repaid), to the Fair Election Fund.

## **Public Funding Account Information**

On or before July 1 of the year preceding the primary election, the Director must determine if the amount in the Fund is sufficient to meet the maximum public contributions reasonably expected to be required during the election cycle. If the Director determines that the total amount available for distribution in the Fund is insufficient to meet the allocations required by this section, the Director must reduce each public contribution to a certified candidate by the same percentage.

## **Insufficient Funds in the Fair Election Fund**

If the Director determines that there are insufficient funds in the Fund for the full distribution authorized by the State Board, the Director must deposit the adjusted amount of authorized public contributions into a participating candidate's publicly funded campaign account within 5 business days from the date the Director receives notification that the State Board authorized the public contribution.

After the Director determines that the Fund is insufficient to distribute any or all public contributions authorized by the State Board, no subsequent claim may be made by a participating candidate based on a public contribution authorized by the State Board on a date prior to the determination of the Fund insufficiency but not received by the Director until after the date of determination of Fund insufficiency.

Note: Funding for this program may be limited. If the total demand for matching funds exceeds the available funds, matching dollars may be reduced proportionally. To ensure accurate expectations, applicants should carefully review current available funding amounts.

## **Contested Elections**

Public Campaign Financing is only available to candidates participating in contested elections. A contested election is defined as an election in which there are more candidates for an office than the number who can be elected to that office.

For example, if there are two Democrats and one Republican running for a single County Council seat in the primary, the Democratic primary election is contested, but the Republican primary is not contested. However, if the single Republican and the winning Democrat advance to the general election, the general election is contested for both candidates.

The Director must be notified by the State Board within five business days from the date that the State Board determines that a participating candidate is no longer in a contested election. If a participating candidate no longer is in a contested election, no further distributions to the participating candidate from the Fund can be made.

## **Allowable Uses of Money**

The allowable uses of money in a publicly funded campaign account are limited to expenses directly related to election campaign activities and expenses incurred during the specific time period for either the primary or general election. Additionally, all goods and services that are received once a candidate has filed his or her intent to participate in the Program must be paid for out of the candidate's publicly funded campaign account.

## Candidates with Prior Campaign Finance Accounts

If a candidate has a campaign finance account created and used in an election prior to the current election cycle, the candidate may file a Notice of Intent to participate in the Fair Election Fund Program if the following conditions are met:

- The candidate has not received any contributions, nor made any expenditures or transfers from the account during the current election cycle, and the candidate certifies to the State Board that he/she will freeze the pre-existing campaign finance account;

OR

- If the candidate has received contributions and/or made any expenditures or transfers from the prior campaign finance account during the current election cycle:
  - the Notice of Intent must be filed at least 24 months prior to the primary election;
  - the expenditures and/or transfers cannot have exceeded \$25,000 for a candidate for County Executive, \$10,000 for a candidate of At-Large Council Member, or \$5,000 for a candidate of District Council Member; and
  - the candidate must certify to the State Board that he/she will freeze the pre-existing campaign finance account

Contributions not exceeding \$250 received from an individual during the current Election Cycle and prior to filing the Notice of Intent may be returned to the individual, and the individual may make a contribution to the candidate's citizen funded campaign account.

## **Purchasing Materials Prior to Filing Notice of Intent**

Assets that the candidate has paid for and received prior to filing their notice of intent to participate in the Program can be used but only in a limited capacity. Otherwise, pre-purchasing by a non-public financing committee for campaign materials or items is prohibited.

**Example 1:** On March 1, 2025, Candidate A contracts with a bus manufacturer to build a custom campaign bus and pays \$100,000 in full for the bus to be built and delivered on July 1, 2025. On April 1, 2025, Candidate A files a Notice of Intent to participate in the Public Election Fund with the State Board. On July 1, 2025, upon receipt of the pre-paid campaign bus, Candidate A would be in violation of the Fair Election Fund Program regulations which prohibit the advanced purchase of goods and services with ineligible contributions received outside of the Program.

**Example 2:** On March 1, 2025, Candidate B contracts with a web developer to create a campaign website for the cost of \$10,000 and pays in full at the time. On March 21, 2025, the website is completed with an ongoing monthly fee of \$99, which began on March 21, 2025. On April 21, 2025, Candidate B files a Notice of Intent to participate in the Fair Election Fund Program with the State Board. Upon filing this Notice of Intent, Candidate B now pays the monthly website fee of \$99 from the candidate's publicly funded campaign account. This is considered to be an allowable expense. The candidate does not have to pay for a new campaign website.

## **Prohibited Uses of Money**

Prohibited uses of money in a publicly funded campaign account include personal use or expenses relating to holding office, payment of a personal endorsement, and the payment of late filing fees.

After filing a Notice of Intent with the State Board, the candidate must not pay for any campaign expenses with any campaign finance account other than the candidate's publicly funded campaign account.

Expenses incurred prior to the time that the applicant candidate was certified by the State Board are not permissible, and therefore, are not allowable uses of public funds.

## **Transfers**

- A public financing committee may not make transfers to any candidate, political party, or political action committee.
- A political committee may not make a transfer into a candidate's publicly funded campaign account.

## **Complaints Against Use of Public Funding**

All complaints regarding uses of public campaign funding should be filed with the State Board of Elections or the State's Attorney's Office.

## **Slates**

A participating candidate may not be a member of a slate.

## **Return of Unspent Money**

All unspent funds remaining in the certified candidate's public campaign financing account must be returned to the Fair Election Fund at the end of the candidate's contested campaign.

Within thirty (30) days after the County Board certifies the results of the primary election, a participating candidate who is not certified to be on the ballot for the general election must return to the Fund any unspent money in the candidate's citizen funded campaign account.

Candidates who win a contested primary election and advance to a contested general election may retain the unspent funds and continue to receive eligible contributions up to the date of the general election for the covered office for which they are a certified candidate. On or before December 31 after the general election, a participating candidate must return any unspent money in the candidate's citizen funded campaign account to the Fair Election Fund. If a candidate does not repay the unspent money to the Fund as specified, interest charges will accrue at the current bank prime loan rate as reported by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.



## Authority Lines

Each item of campaign material must include an authority line, set apart from the other printing or content of the campaign material. The authority line must state the name and address (unless the address is on file with the State Board) of the person who is responsible for the production and distribution of the campaign material.

Campaign material includes signs, buttons, letters, tickets, solicitations, radio and television advertisements, websites, social media accounts, bumper stickers, and paraphernalia such as pencils, hats, and t-shirts.

The authority line for a public financing committee must contain:

- The name of the Treasurer, and
- The name of the campaign finance entity

If the material is too small to permit the inclusion of all required information in a legible manner, the material need only contain the name and title of the Treasurer.

The Office of the Attorney General has stated that almost no material is too small to permit inclusion of the complete authority line. Accordingly, every effort should be made to include the entire authority line.

### Mailings:

If there is more than one piece or item bearing the candidate's name in a mailing (for example, a brochure, a cover letter, a bumper sticker, a reproduction of a newspaper article), each piece must bear the authority line. An envelope that does not include the name of the candidate, the name of the campaign finance entity, or a campaign slogan is not required to contain an authority line.

## Authority Lines (continued)

### Campaign Material on Electronic Media:

**Webpages and Social Media accounts:** Candidates and political committees that have a web page or social media account must place an authority line on the home or landing page of the website or social media account. An authority line is not required after each post or tweet. However, since each post or tweet is considered campaign material, the political committee is required to retain a copy of posts and tweets for at least one year.

**Electronic Media Advertisement:** Electronic media advertisement by a political committee is required to have an authority line. If the electronic media advertisement is too small for an authority line:

- The ad must allow the viewer to click on the ad and take the viewer to a home or landing page that displays the authority line; or
- The ad must be registered with the State Board.

Examples of electronic advertisement ads deemed too small:

- A paid text advertisement that is 200 characters or less in length
- A micro bar
- A button ad

### Copies of Campaign Material:

Each political committee is responsible for publishing and distributing an item of campaign material and is required to keep a sample copy of the item for at least one year after the general election following the date when the item was published or distributed. For each item of campaign material disseminated through the internet, the sample copy may be either a paper facsimile copy or an electronic copy that can be produced as a paper facsimile upon request. These requirements do not apply to a billboard or a sign distributed by a political committee.

# Additional Resources

Fair Election Fund Commission

Email: [fairelections@co.pg.md.us](mailto:fairelections@co.pg.md.us)

Website: [www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/boards-commissions/fair-election-fund-commission](http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/boards-commissions/fair-election-fund-commission)

Prince George's Fair Election Fund Law  
(County Code Subtitle 10, Division 26)

Prince George's County Council

<https://pgccouncil.us/>

Maryland State Board of Elections

County Public Financing Program

[www.elections.state.md.us/campaign\\_finance/County\\_public.html](http://www.elections.state.md.us/campaign_finance/County_public.html)

Email: [info.sbe@maryland.gov](mailto:info.sbe@maryland.gov)

Phone: 410-269-2840

Prince George's County Board of Elections

[www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/board-elections](http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/board-elections)

Email: [election@co.pg.md.us](mailto:election@co.pg.md.us)

Phone: 301-341-7300

Maryland Campaign Reporting Information System (MDCRIS)

[www.campaignfinance.maryland.gov](http://www.campaignfinance.maryland.gov)

Help Desk: [www.elections.state.md.us](http://www.elections.state.md.us)

Email: [ccf.sbe@maryland.gov](mailto:ccf.sbe@maryland.gov)

Phone: 410-269-2880

Fax: 410-974-2019