



**Testimony for the House Rules and Executive Nominations
February 26, 2018**

**HB 407 - General Assembly - Live and Archived Video Streaming of
Meetings**

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SUPPORT

The ACLU of Maryland urges you to issue a favorable report on HB 407, which would require that the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) make available to the public live and archived video streaming of all meetings of the Senate, House of Delegates, and a standing committee, including any hearings held by a standing committee.

Under the Legislative Policy of the Open Meetings subtitle,

- a) It is essential to the maintenance of a democratic society that, except in special and appropriate circumstances:
1. public business be performed in an open and public manner; and
 2. citizens be allowed to observe:
 - i. the performance of public officials; and
 - ii. the deliberations and decisions that the making of public policy involves.¹

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This expectation of transparency should be extended to all meetings of the General Assembly. The public has great interest in the business conducted by the members of the MGA.

It is oftentimes not only inconvenient, but onerous for members of the public who are located in geographically isolated areas to regularly attend the MGA's meetings in Annapolis. Members of the public local have a right to be afforded the opportunity to stay apprised of MGA's activities, including observing discussions and the decision-making process.

The State already has the capacity to live stream every committee hearing in the General Assembly, as well as the meetings of countless other state agencies. The other meetings held by members of our General Assembly should be held to the same standards of transparency and public access.

For these reasons, we urge you to issue a favorable recommendation for HB 407.

¹ Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-501 (West).