



HB217 – Open Meetings Act – Requirements for Providing Agendas
House Health and Government Operations Committee
23 February 2016
SUPPORT

The ***Maryland Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform*** (Coalition) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, statewide alliance of thousands of individuals and 100 organizations. It works to promote health equity through access to high-quality, comprehensive and affordable health care for all Marylanders. Today we are testifying in support of **House Bill 217 – the Open Meetings Act – Requirements for Providing Agendas**.

We very much appreciate the persistence of Delegate Krebs, as demonstrated by the fact that this is the third year she has submitted this legislation. We continue to provide our support because we believe that it is essential that the work of Maryland's governmental bodies be open and transparent. That is core fundamental for a democratic society.

Current statute addresses this by requiring that there be a reasonable notice in advance of all meetings of a "public body." However, we believe this is insufficient. The public and particularly interested and/or impacted parties, need to know, in advance, what issues are to be discussed and what votes are to be taken. This requires that the agendas be made available in a timely manner as called for in this legislation.

Last year, just three members of the Coalition's leadership served on more than a dozen different workgroups and advisory committees, which encompassed close to 100 meetings. In addition to those are the other meetings related to health care reform that we attend. Without access to the agendas in advance of the meetings it would be impossible to allocate our resources.

Maryland's consumers need and deserve effective public policy advocates to ensure that their voices are heard and their needs met. To do that, a minimum requirement is that meeting agendas are available in a timely manner.

We applaud the tenacity of the bill's sponsor and urge a favorable report on House Bill 217.