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SENATE BILL 287 (FAV) –

State Board of Elections – Municipal Elections – Publication of Results on Website

February 14, 2023

Maryland House of Delegates

Ways and Means Committee

RE: Written Testimony in Support of Favorable Report for SB 287

I write in support of SB 287 which would require the publication of municipal election results on the Maryland Board of Elections website.

While I currently serve as a County Commissioner on the Carroll County Board of Commissioners, I was previously elected three successive times to the City Council of Taneytown, where in my most recent term, I served in the capacity as Mayor Pro Tem.

It is well-learned American wisdom that all politics is local, and that the most local government is the most adaptive and responsive, suited uniquely to address uniquely local circumstances.

As such, I have personally witnessed a renewed interest in local elections, with records being set in the last several years for voter turnout in Taneytown. Citizens rightly recognize what a tremendous and positive impact local governance can have when carried out responsibly and capably, and how so much of what affects daily life is determined at the local level. These are the kinds of things sometimes taken for granted, but which we depend upon regularly: clean water and efficient sewers, fully-manned and well-funded police departments, operable streetlights, maintained streets, parks, public spaces, and more. It is through the municipal decision-making process that choices are directly and regularly seen and experienced by municipal citizens, firsthand.

In addition to renewed interest and participation in local elections, citizens have also come to expect improved measures to ensure election integrity and transparency – and municipal governments have responded in various ways. For example, Taneytown requires a paper trail for absentee and mail-in ballots, requires campaign finance reporting, and provides seating for poll watchers.

Part of that process of continuing integrity and transparency is the ability to access election results. While results are posted, reported, and maintained by municipal governments, tracking down those results can sometimes be unintentionally difficult. Search engines do not always yield the most precise results, and election returns may be relocated on websites over time for one reason or another.

Election results do not merely demonstrate which candidates won or lost, but serve as an official record of elections. They demonstrate that municipal elections count just as much as state and national elections, that municipal voices also matter amongst the ever-unfolding course of human history. They demonstrate the seriousness with which even municipal level government is to be taken. They reflect the beliefs, ideas, hopes, dreams, trends, and concerns of citizens, and serve as a measure of the American body politic writ small.

America is a ground-upward nation, where local events reverberate nationally. Given that municipal elected officials interact and work with county, state, and national elected officials, how their voices translate or magnify upwards depends upon whom voters choose to represent them.

All politics is local, indeed. The American Founding did not begin in a marble-pillared edifice, but in small town churches and hamlet meeting halls, in conversations held among friends along country roads, between farm fields, in trade shop floors, and on village greens.

For those who are interested in how their elections turned out, for those who have a vested interest in their communities, and for those who are considering the important choice of filing as a municipal candidate, it only makes sense that municipal election results should be collected and easily accessible along with local, state, and national election results.

After all, who knows what great events might touch the quiet places we call home?