



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB1029 – Election Law - Registered Voter List and
Petitions (Ballot Petition Modernization Act)
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
On March 1st 2024

Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Senate Bill 1029 requires that the State Board of Elections adopt regulations for the secure storage and use of voter data from the list of registered voters and specifying procedures and requirements relating to electronic signatures. In addition, this bill will establish and alter certain provisions governing the petition process, including provisions regarding the collection and invalidation of signatures, use of electronic signatures, and attestations by petition circulators.

Having the ability to sign a petition is a fundamental right that all individuals in the state of Maryland should have. Currently voters provide their full name as it appears on the statewide voter registration list. They can also provide their surname of registration and at least one full given name and the initials of any other names. The signing of petitions currently requires either print or handwritten signatures. Not allowing electronic signatures poses a great obstacle for various individuals in the state of Maryland, because it silences the voices of those who cannot physically sign ballot petitions. For

clarity purposes it is more precise to allow for electronic signatures in case the State and Local Board of Elections Staff are unable to read or match the information to the state voter database. As we move forward in a technological world, the acceptance of electronic signatures is integral to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the ballot petition process. In 2020, when the State Board of Elections authorized that electronic signatures be used due the COVID-19 pandemic, it was proven to be a successful and convenient way for individuals in the state of Maryland to exercise their rights. If establishments in Maryland have the ability to file, make payments, and apply for licensing/renewals all digitally, there is no reason why allowing electronic signatures for the petition process should be any different.

States like Massachusetts, Michigan, Utah, and many more have allowed campaigns to collect electronic signatures. These states have found that allowing for electronic signatures has opened the door for so many individuals to have access to their government and have their rights protected. It is time that we do the same for our great citizens of this state.

As such I urge this committee to issue a favorable report on SB1029. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Senator Jill P. Carter