

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – SB 605 – Election Law - Automatic Voter Registration - Alterations

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) respectfully submits this letter of information on Senate Bill (SB) 605 – Election Law - Automatic Voter Registration - Alterations. SB 605 would require MHBE to make significant alterations to the agency’s current automatic voter registration procedures for the purpose of increasing the rate of automatic voter registration state-wide.

MHBE was designated as an “Automatic voter registration agency” pursuant to HB 1007 of 2016, and subsequently set up and operates an electronic voter registration system that is integrated with the Maryland Health Connection (MHC) on-line health insurance application functionality. The system currently provides an electronic means for applicable transactions (any application for or renewal of health insurance coverage through MHC), to either register to vote or update voter registration. The user interface and file transmission of voter registration information to the State Board of Elections is fully automated.

SB 605 would require MHBE to implement the following major changes to our voter registration system:

- Integrate a data-exchange with the State Board of Elections in order to be able to determinate current voter registration information for all applicants.
- For all applicants at least 16 years of age with confirmed U.S. citizenship who **are not** currently registered to vote, MHBE would mail a non-forwardable automatic voter registration paper notice, and give each household member the option to opt **out** of being automatically registered to vote by checking a box on the notice and returning it to MHBE.
- For all applicants at least 16 years of age with confirmed U.S. citizenship who **are** currently registered to vote but whose information submitted indicates a change of address or name, MHBE would similarly mail a non-forwardable automatic voter

registration update paper notice, and give each household member the opportunity to correct any errors on the updated information and return it to MHBE.

These system changes add the following associated additional costs to MHBE: IT system change costs, print notice costs, return envelope costs, and the cost of intaking and processing returned opt out forms and address/name correction forms. MHBE estimates **\$281,000** in IT implementation costs, and ongoing IT maintenance and operations costs of **\$130,000** annually. These expenditures are not currently included in MHBE's operating budget.

MHBE serves the majority of Medicaid enrollees (around 1.2 million individuals) as well as individual market enrollees (around 200 thousand), and estimates the following annual notice volumes:

- **180,000** notices mailed to households with enrollees not currently registered to vote.
- **60,000** notices mailed to households reporting an address change.
- **24,000** returned forms.

MHBE estimates the total costs of printing, mailing, and intake and processing of returned forms associated with this estimated volume of mailed notices at around **\$620,000** in additional annual expenditures that are also not currently included in MHBE's operating budget.

MHBE is supportive of state-wide initiatives to increase automatic voter registration and would be able to operationalize the requirements of this bill should funds be made available based on the estimated associated costs.

For further discussions or questions on SB 605, please contact Johanna Fabian-Marks, Director of Policy and Plan Management at johanna.fabian-marks@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Michele Eberle
Executive Director