

SB1029- Election Law - Registered Voter List and Petitions (Ballot Petition Modernization Act)

**Hearing before the Senate Energy, Education, and Environment Committee,
March 01, 2024, 1:00PM**

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

I, Michael Lent of District 8, support Senate Bill 1029, the Registered Voter List and Petitions (Ballot Petition Modernization Act), because it would make it easier for voters like me to sign petitions to put independent candidates, small parties, local charter amendments, or state referenda on the ballot.

Marylanders should have easier common sense ways to access and utilize our voting rights. The Ballot Petition Modernization Act will help to modernize this grassroots democratic process and better engage citizens in voting and ballot creation.

What the legislation does is listed below:

- Requires the state board of elections to develop regulations allowing ballot access petitions to be signed electronically
- Eliminates a provision that invalidates a voter's signature if the voter uses a derivative of their given names(first name or middle name) and replaces it with a reasonability standard.
- Requires that the voter's surname (last name) on the petition matches the surname the voter is registered with.
- Removes a prohibition against inadvertently signing a petition twice.
- If the petition is deemed insufficient this bill requires that the petition sponsor receive a physical or electronic copy of the petition that indicates the deficiencies.
- Provides voters with an opportunity to correct technical deficiencies if their signature is invalidated.
- Sets the judicial review period for an insufficient petition to start on the date the sponsor is notified of the deficiency instead of the day of the determination of the deficiency.

These changes make it easier for voters who intend to affix their signature to a ballot access petition to do so, and to make sure that signature is counted. This legislation can help remove obstacles and the obscure rules that reduce a people's engagement and trust in the political systems.

I ask that the Senate Energy, Education, and Environment Committee issue a report of FAVORABLE on SB1029.

Michael Lent, District 8
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