



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
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The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chairman
And Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Senate of Maryland
Annapolis, Maryland

RE: **HB0333**- Election Disinformation – **UNFAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members,

HB0333 is of concern because it opens the door to a stifling of free speech.

“Disinformation” is wide open to interpretation, especially in the highly charged partisan environments that have surrounded recent elections.

This legislation calls for the State Board of Elections to establish a website portal to receive complaints of election disinformation, to evaluate and respond to any perceived disinformation, and to determine what complaints are referred to the State Prosecutor.

The original version of the bill limited reporting and possible referral for prosecution to “... large social media platforms”. That phrase was removed via amendment. The bill now appears to broaden the reach to every individual and all organizations. This could easily result in nuisance reports for individuals simply voicing a personal opinion with no nefarious intent. Reports to the State Board of Elections could cause personal embarrassment and quite possibly have negative work impacts. The potential for criminal charges or other punitive action by the State Prosecutor could subject an individual or organization to legal expenses, even when cleared of false accusations.

Please give **HB 0333** an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

Sincerely,

Ella Ennis
Legislative Chairman