

SB1029_Ellis_Fav_1.pdf

Uploaded by: Andy Ellis

Position: FAV

Steven Andrew Ellis
SB 1029
Favorable

“ Online petition gathering has been brought up before our board (by third-party officials), and it’s one of those things we looked at. We allowed it for COVID and it was successful, but over time, it’s definitely a policy shift that is in the domain of policymakers.”

-Jared Demaranis-Administrator of the State Board of Elections, Baltimore Sun, June 23rd 2023

I am one of the “third-party officials” Demaranis was referencing in this interview.

In April of 2020 I was the co-chair of the Maryland Green Party and our ballot access drive had been thrown into disarray by Governor Hogan’s COVID State of Emergency declaration. The in-person community meetings, fairs and farmers markets where the vast majority of petition signatures are collected were no longer happening, and were in many cases prohibited by law.

I, along with the representatives from the Libertarian Party, worked with Jared Demaranis and other SBE Staff to inform the development of emergency regulations for electronic signature gathering during the COVID State of Emergency(SBE Policy 2020-01).

I agree with Demaranis that the COVID emergency provisions were successful. I can’t speak for Demaranis about what he means by successful but, in my opinion, the 2020 policy was successful at allowing petitioning during the COVID State of Emergency. Beyond that I think it provided insight into three policy benefits that go beyond the emergency.

1. It was easier and more accessible for voters to digest the information in the petition and to provide their correct information for the form, when they could do so over the web instead of at a farmers market or a festival. Voters made more informed choices and could be relatively certain their signature would be counted.
2. It was more efficient and effective for the staff at the State and Local Boards of Election. They were able to read typed information, and electronic signatures instead of having to read handwriting and trying to compare it to information in the voter database.
3. It was easier for the sponsors of the petition because we knew the signatures we collected were much more likely to be validated when they were filled out electronically. It is typical practice for petition campaigns to collect 15,000 to 20,000 signatures when they need 10,000. Typically 25-35% of petition signatures in handwriting and on paper are invalidated, based on name standards, date standards, signature standards, and other issues with the paper sheets.

Since 2021, I have advocated electronic signature bills in the general assembly.

I think it is a COVID era experiment that makes sense to make permanent.

As the leader of the Green Party of the United States- Ballot Access Policy working group I have had the opportunity to do extensive research on Ballot Petition laws and best practices.

In my opinion the primary measure we should be using to evaluate ballot petition policy is the signature validation rate of legitimate expressions of voter preference. If a voter is qualified to sign a petition, and they make a reasonable effort to provide the information needed, then it is a policy success if their signature counts and policy failure if their signature is invalidated.

SB 1029 addresses this policy question at multiple points in the petition process. On the front end it improves the legitimate signature validation rate by allowing voters to use web based electronic signatures, which have a much higher validation rate. It also addresses it in the middle of the process by requiring the state and local boards to use reasonability standards for evaluating names. The current exacting name standard invalidates many potentially legitimate signatures. Finally, by giving voters the ability to correct technical errors which cause their signature to be invalidated, this bill provides another mechanism for voters to ensure their signatures are counted.

This bill modernizes processes in a sensible and measured way that makes it more likely that voters will have their legitimate expressions honored. For that reason I encourage the committee to provide a favorable reports on SB 1029

Attached is a sign on letter, and all the names of people who have signed and agreed to have their name include.

The sign-on form can be accessed here <https://forms.gle/vezN7mnmQ4cRmKsZ8>

SB1029_Ellis_Fav_2.pdf

Uploaded by: Andy Ellis

Position: FAV

Support the Ballot Petition Modernization Act HB 1109/SB 1029

Sign On To Letter Of Support

The [Ballot Petition Modernization Act](#) has been introduced to the Maryland General Assembly for the 2024 session. The House Bill ([HB1109](#)) is Sponsored by Delegate Sheila Ruth. The Senate Bill ([SB 1029](#)) is sponsored by Senator Jill Carter.

Signing a petition to put an independent candidate, a small party, a local charter amendment or a state referendum on the ballot is a right all Maryland voters have. Currently voters provide their name, address and signature via handwriting on paper forms. These forms then have to be read by State and Local Board of Elections staff, and if any handwriting is difficult to read or does not exactly match the information in the state voter database, a voter's signature can be thrown out.

This legislation makes it easier and more accessible for voters to exercise this right by allowing for electronic signatures on petitions, and clarifying the administrative processes by which the state and local boards evaluate submitted petitions. Electronic signatures were allowed by the State Board of Elections during the COVID State of Emergency. State Board of Elections Administrator Jared Demarinis has described electronic signatures to the [Baltimore Sun as "successful"](#). Now it is time for lawmakers to make this common sense improvement permanent.

We ask our legislators to support the Ballot Petition Modernization Act

s.andrew.ellis@gmail.com [Switch account](#)



Not shared

* Indicates required question



Individual Signers

Owen Silverman Andrews
Dana Polson
Charlotte McBrearty
Mary Rooker
Ashley Esposito
Andy Ellis
Andrew S Eneim
Zack Buster
Darrell Roary
Bonnie Lane
John Frederick Miles Jr
Beth Hufnagel
Jason Harris
Devonie Doles
Erik Powery
Robert Alex Stubblefield
Christina Meninger
Hiruy Hadgu
Kyle Long
Sterling Sanders
Karen L Jennings
Justin Legrande
Edward Scott
Kenneth Ross Aro
John R. Robison
Matthew Beyers
Michael O'Loughlin
Brandon Barrett
Nate Golden
Renaud Brown
Charlie Cooper
Craig Collins-Young
Jennifer Yukna
Benjamin Smith
Bill Barry
Marsha Coleman
Hal Ginsberg
Linda D Saffell
Christopher Ervin
James Joseph Madigan
Jeremy Collins
Matthew Robert Willis
Mark Patro
Tim Willard
Lucy Duff
Marjory M. Donn



Zhimei Zhu
Paulette Hammond
Roberta Reichwein
Robert Benton
David Brown
Philip Benenati
Carol Ann Billett
Justin Sindall
Barbara Weaver
Conner Wolfe
Jason Makstein
Ari Gutman
Catalina Byrd
Kirk Douglas Smith Sr.
Edward Joseph Ridge
Jeanne Lehning
Brian Bittner
David Jeang
Lorenzo Gaztanaga
Meagan Buster
Megan Kenny
Charly Carter
Sim Low
Paul Kim
Mairin Srygley
Lyla Atta
Meagan Braganca
Travis Acton
Nicole Fabricanf
Justin Otter
Eric J. Blitz
ako onyango
Ailish Hopper
Marc Ben Steiner
Vincent S. Tola
Ethan Eblaghie
Theodore Nehemias
Christine E Frink
Councilman Ryan Dorsey
Michael Lent
Mary G Ellis
Mary Welliver-Dillon
Desmond Stinnie
Rebecca Hade Pobee
Dr. Sandy G. Mason
A. Adar Ayira
Chuck Modiano
Cam Cassidy



Timothy Vandover
Eric Miller
Russell Rezek
Peter Matchette
Chelsea Monae Sherman
Jeenly Louis
Denise Parker
Jonathan Wynn Smith
Andrew J. Barnhart
Inas El-Sabban
farid najmabadi
Ian Thompson
Ahmad Gharanfoli
Jennifer Heffner
Jane Simpson
Nancy Delgado
William Samuel
Louis Brendan Curran, Esq.
Claudia Leight
Helen Hooper Butt
Natalie H. Rees
Joan B MacDonnell
Tim A Vettel
Wayne Straight
Pat Ratkowski
Taji Amani
Forest Henry Book
Ronald Stephen Regnier
Peter Oliver-Krueger
Liv Romano
Calvin C. Martin
Dave Renaud
Ellen E Barfield
Andrew Messick
Bill McCarron
Br. Merrick Moses, OSB
Arthur Milholland
Alison L. MacKenzie
Paula Bienenfeld
Moisette I. Sweat, Esquire
Kim Jensen
Paul A Baroody
Christine Rai
Danah harbi
Diana Reighart
Paige Passanrtino
Michael J Goodhues
Jeffrey R. Russell
Deborah Schumann



Kelly Esslinger
Loraine Arikat
Mark Lautman
Dan Ragogna
Ingrid Sabio-McLaughlin
J Little
Marisha Leiblum
Julie Baker
Christina Powell
David Bullman
Stacey St. Holder
Mohammad Siddique
Doris Koller
Muhammad Jameel
Adam Wise
Michael Redding
Daniel Whalen
Kimberly Katz
Rachel Bush Erdman
Andrew Ferree
Monica Hilliard
Alice Noel Barrett, Esq.
Bess Altwerger
Leland H Bradshaw
Allison Seyler
Christine Shea
Eric Gresia
Daniel Ross
Kris Messer
Amber Ivey

Who is circulating this petition and why?

This sign on letter is circulated by Andy Ellis as an individual. Andy has worked with the Administrators of the State Board of Elections and the bill sponsors since 2020 to advance electronic signatures and ballot petition reform.

This sign on letter will be shared with bill sponsors, included in Andy's written testimony, and the information provided will be for Andy to contact you with additional information about this legislation.



SB1029_Ballot_Petition_Modernization_Act_MLC_FAV.p

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR SB1029

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

Bill Sponsor: Senator Carter

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB1029 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our coalition members are generally very active participants in election work, especially in getting ballot petition signatures. This bill makes the process of getting signatures on ballot petitions easier by allowing for electronic signatures. It also sets up procedures for validating the electronic signatures, and a process for storing them and providing them to the sponsor. We believe that being able to get electronic signatures on ballot petitions is a much more streamlined way of allowing people to get involved in the democratic process. Having more people engaged and empowered to support people and ideas that affect our state is a positive thing.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

GMOM_SB1029_030124.pdf

Uploaded by: Charlie Cooper

Position: FAV



Board of Directors

Charlie Cooper, President

Doug Miller, Vice President

Renaud Brown

Tina Coplan

Sheila Ruth

Wylie Sawyer

Ashley Sparks

Martin Wulfe

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 1029 – ELECTION LAW -
REGISTERED VOTER LIST AND PETITIONS
(BALLOT PETITION MODERNIZATION ACT)**

March 1, 2024

By Charlie Cooper, President

Get Money Out–Maryland is an all-volunteer force seeking to get big money out of our political system and make elections fairer. Ten thousand Marylanders have actively supported our work. We believe that every citizen should have equal access to the ballot as a voter or as a candidate. We also work to regulate the role of big money in our elections and to reduce the disproportionate influence of concentrated wealth on our political system.

An important aspect of our democracy is that citizens have an opportunities to file petitions with the State Board of Elections to:

- Appoint a board to draft a new charter for a jurisdiction,
- Create a political party,
- Nominate an individual for office, or
- Place a question on the ballot.

SB 1029 modernizes the petitioning process by allowing for electronic signature collection and by creating a process to allow a voter to correct errors in the information associated with the voter's signature.

These new procedures will be efficient and effective and have already been evaluated on an emergency basis during the pandemic. Thus, we endorse this proposal because we hope and expect that it will remove barriers to political participation for ordinary citizens who wish to participate in the political process without wasting their time.

The bill also contains a provision that the State Board of Elections will publish new regulations to protect the security of voter lists provided to registered Maryland voters under Section 3-506 of the Election Law Article.

We enthusiastically support this proposal and strongly urge the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report for SB 1029.

SB1029_ Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Jill Carter

Position: FAV



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

SB 1029 Ballot Petition Modernization Act (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Loraine Arikat

Position: FAV



Testimony for SB1029
Election Law – Registered Voter List and Petitions (Ballot Petition Modernization Act)
March 1, 2024
Position: Favorable

Dear Senator Feldman and members of Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

My name is Loraine Arikat and I am the Senior Policy Analyst at 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East in Maryland and D.C. 1199 SEIU is the largest healthcare union in the nation, with over 10,000 members in hospitals, long term care settings, and federally qualified health centers in the region. 1199SEIU is a proud lead organization of the **With Us for Us Community Wealth Building Coalition** (WUFU) in Baltimore City. The WUFU coalition aims to bring together grassroots community leaders that are committed to organizing for equitable development, holding anchor institutions accountable to investing in the community, and racial justice.

We support SB 1029 because our coalition is currently leading a Baltimore City charter amendment ballot initiative that would create a Community Wealth Building Fund governed by a People’s Commission. As a grassroots coalition aiming to bring community power to Baltimore City’s most disinvested neighborhoods, we know first-hand that collecting valid, legible signatures is tedious and needlessly difficult. This legislation would ensure that every eligible voter who wants to support a community-powered ballot initiative like ours will have their signature counted.

The Ballot Petition Modernization Act is consistent with our State Constitution’s focus on representative and grassroots democracy, and it is a commonsense modernization of a process that is key to utilizing the voting rights ensured in our Constitution.

For these reasons and more 1199 SEIU urges a favorable report on SB 1029.

Sincerely,

Loraine Arikat
Senior Policy Analyst
1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East
Loraine.arikat@1199.org

With Us for Us: Community Wealth Building Coalition is comprised of Baltimore-based organizations including *Baltimore Renters United, Baltimore Student Union, Baltimore Roundtable on Economic Development (BRED), Black Yield, CASA, Clean Water Action, Community Development Network of Maryland, Communities United, Community Wealth Builders, Economic Action Maryland, Energy Justice Network, Invest York Road, Jews United for Justice, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy, Metro Baltimore AFL-CIO, AFT-Maryland, No Boundaries Coalition, North East Housing Initiative, Organizing Black, Partners for Dignity and Rights, Plantation Park Heights Urban Farm, Progressive Maryland, Public Justice Center, Red Emma’s Bookstore and Cafe, SHARE Baltimore, South Baltimore Community Land Trust, Teachers and Researchers United at Johns Hopkins University, Village of Love and Resistance, 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East*

SB1029 - Registered Voter List and Petitions - FAV

Uploaded by: Michael Lent

Position: FAV

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
2504 Creighton Ave, Parkville, MD 21234

Testimony in support of SB1029.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB1029_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

3/01/2024

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#/1029 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB#/1029, Election Law - Registered Voter List and Petitions (Ballot Petition Modernization Act)

This bill works to add additional security to processing and safeguarding voter data. It will establish greater management of the petition process to be followed by voters seeking to place an item on the ballot.

Maryland elections are secure! As reported in *The Daily Record* article “Tiny percentage of Md. voters cast two ballots in recent election, audit finds”, “More than 100 Marylanders voted twice in the 2020 election, representing a microscopic proportion of the state’s electorate... The State Board of Elections prevented nearly 1,400 voters from casting multiple ballots in 2020, and it caught those who did, later referring them to the Office of the State Prosecutor to potentially be criminally charged...the number of people who voted more than once in 2020... 106, according to the State Board of Elections... the number represents about 0.00003% of the state’s more than 4 million active voters.”¹

This bill will strengthen the management of our voter data and its use as well as how voters signing a petition to place an item on a ballot are verified. It will increase confidence in the processes used. It will combat misinformation and disinformation on voters and voting.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/1029

¹ <https://thedailyrecord.com/2023/11/03/tiny-percentage-of-md-voters-cast-two-ballots-in-recent-election-audit-finds/>

SB1029_MDSierraClub_fav_EEE - 1Mar2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard Norling

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony on: SB 1029 Election Law – Registered Voter List and Petitions (Ballot Petition Modernization Act)
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 1, 2024

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on SB 1029, which modernizes the law and processes associated with election-related petitions. Specifically, the bill:

- authorizes electronic signatures on petitions;
- repeals restrictions on the way a voter signs their name;
- provides a process for a voter to correct a deficiency so their signature can be counted; and
- repeals a misdemeanor for signing a petition more than once (only a voter’s first validated signature will be counted).

The Sierra Club and its members care about both the natural and human environments, including promoting racial and social equity. As a grassroots organization, we believe that voting and related processes should be as accessible and convenient as possible for all individuals eligible.

Because in-person gatherings were discouraged during the pandemic state of emergency, the State Board of Elections in April 2020 authorized the temporary use of electronic signatures to make possible and facilitate signature-gathering for petitions to gain access to or place a question on the ballot.¹ SB 1029 puts the option to use electronic signatures into law.

Current law contains restrictions that make it difficult for a voter’s signature on a petition to be validated and counted, even when the voter’s intention is clear. If a voter does not remember exactly how their name appears on the voter registration list, their signature could be invalidated for merely failing to include a middle initial.

If the accompanying information on the petition confirms the identity of the individual, SB 1029 specifies that they can sign using a derivative of their given name (e.g., “Alex Smith” instead of “Alexandra Q. Smith”). And if there is some technical deficiency that would invalidate a voter’s signature, the bill provides a reasonable opportunity for the voter to correct the deficiency so their signature can be validated and counted.

Because the bill allows a voter to sign an election-related petition either in person or electronically and makes it more likely for a signature to be counted as the voter intended, we urge a favorable report on SB 1029.

Rich Norling
Chair, Voting Rights Committee
Rich.Norling@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

¹ See “[SBE Policy 2020-02: Extension of Certain Petition-Filing Deadlines](#)” and “[SBE Policy 2021-01: Extension of Temporary Electronic Petition Signature Acceptance](#)”.

SB 1029 Test.pdf

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV

Subject: Favorable SB1029

Date: March 1st

From: National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

15 Charles Plaza, #3002, Baltimore, MD 21201

president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Education Environment and Energy Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Education Environment and Energy Committee to support SB1029. This bill will permit the use of electronic signatures when people are signing a petition. The person can sign a petition to put a question on the ballot, to create a new political party, or to appoint a member of a charter board, etc.... The petition process is a basic tenant of democracy because it allows people to express their views on many subjects.

SB1029 allows more participation by people because they can use an electronic signature. There are numerous security requirements in the bill that will strengthen the validity of the electronic signature. It will eliminate one source of voting discrimination faced by people with disabilities because they will not have to submit paper signatures. People with disabilities will be more likely to participate when they can satisfy the requirement with an electronic signature.

Please vote in favor of SB1029. Give persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in democracy.