



Maryland State Board of Elections

HB 585 - Protecting Election Officials Act of 2024 - FAVORABLE

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the State Board of Elections, I am pleased to support House Bill 585 to establish penalties in the Election Law Article for threats and harassment against election officials.

As the members of this committee are well aware, there has been a great deal of national attention to threats and harassment against election officials. Some of our colleagues in other states and their families have had to arrange for 24-hour police protection, have had their spouses and children targeted, had to leave their homes or had their property vandalized.

As public officials, of course, we are used to some amount of discontent from candidates and voters who are not happy with the outcome of an election. But freedom of speech cannot be allowed to cross the line into making personal threats against the life or safety of an election official, a poll worker, or a member of their family.

We were fortunate in the State of Maryland that we did not experience the same extent of the threats in the last presidential election as some of our colleagues in swing states. But we should not wait to take action until we have local news coverage here in Maryland of a child or a spouse of an election official or a poll worker being threatened because of that official's role in the election process.

This is an important bill to support our staff, of course, but I want to emphasize that we also need this bill to help us recruit and retain Election Judges. The General Assembly demonstrated its commitment to Election Judges by passing legislation last year to increase their pay. By supporting this legislation, you will further demonstrate your support for the Election Judges who serve their community at the polls by making it possible for us to assure them that we are doing everything we can to protect them against threats and harassment.

Thank you and we look forward to your favorable passage of this bill.

Jared DeMarinis, State Administrator of Elections

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**JARED DeMARINIS, STATE ADMINISTRATOR
STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

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