



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: HB 585 - Protecting Election Officials Act of 2024

SPONSOR: The Speaker (By Request - Administration)

HEARING DATE: February 6, 2024

COMMITTEE: Judiciary

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS HB 585 - Protecting Election Officials Act of 2024**, which prohibits a person from threatening to harm an election official or an immediate family member of an election official because of the election official's role in administering the election process, with violations subject to penalties of imprisonment for up to three years and/or a fine of up to \$2,500.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) indicates that in recent years election officials, staff, and poll workers have been subjected to threats, accusations of crime, and leaked private information ("doxing") at much higher rates than usual. According to information updated by NCSL in December 2023, 14 states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington) have enacted laws specifically addressing protections for election officials and poll workers since 2020.

Additionally, a 2022 Brennan Center for Justice poll of election officials showed that more than half of respondents expressed concerns about the safety of their colleagues. Nearly one in three knew at least one colleague who quit their job partly or entirely because of safety concerns, increased threats, or intimidation.

This bill addresses the epidemic of threats and harassment targeting election officials that pose a fundamental threat to Maryland's ability to conduct free and fair elections. It does this by creating a new misdemeanor charge in the Election Law Article for threats against election officials or their families, prosecutable by either States' Attorneys or the Office of the State Prosecutor.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS HB 585** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.