



**Position: Favorable
House Judiciary Committee**

To: The Honorable Speaker (By Request - Administration) and the Honorable Delegates Allen, Amprey, Anderton, Bagnall, Bartlett, Bhandari, Boaf, Bouchat, Boyce, Charkoudian, Conaway, Crutchfield, Davis, Ebersole, Embry, Fennell, Foley, Fraser-Hidalgo, Grossman, Guyton, Guzzone, Harris, Harrison, Henson, Hill, Ivey, Jackson, A. Johnson, S. Johnson, D. Jones, Kaufman, J. Long, Lopez, Love, McCaskill, T. Morgan, Munoz, Palakovich Carr, Pasteur, Patterson, Phillips, Pruski, Roberson, Roberts, Ruff, Ruth, Simmons, Simpson, Solomon, Spiegel, Stewart, Taveras, Taylor, Toles, Turner, Valderrama, Watson, White Holland, Williams, and Wu.

Greetings,

My name is Lauren Wyatt and I am the Advocacy Lead for Black Girls Vote, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization committed to engaging, educating, and empowering black women to activate their voice by using their vote. I would like to thank the House Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to share why this issue is important to our organization.

Black Girls Vote has four main pillars: economic development, education, healthcare and of course voting rights. We are committed to democracy and protecting our right to free and fair elections. We do this by cultivating a community of informed citizens and mobilizing them to polls through voter registration. However, at a time where protecting our right to vote is pivotal to maintaining democracy, we must also acknowledge the importance of protecting election officials.

For this reason, we urge support for HB0585 which would prohibit a person from knowingly and willfully making a threat 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. Below you will find more reasons why it is imperative that we put measures in place to protect election officials:

1. 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.¹

¹ <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/state-laws-providing-protection-for-election-officials-and-staff>



2. Data shows that nearly one in three election officials have been harassed, abused, or threatened because of their job. ²

We must address this state and national issue. Since 2020, 14 states have passed bills that enforce protections for election officials. We urge support for this bill which would make Maryland another state to take proactive steps to protect election officials in the same manner that they protect public officials.

Sincerely,

Lauren A. Wyatt, MS
Advocacy Lead
Black Girls Vote, Inc.
Email: lwyatt@blackgirlsvote.com