



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**House Bill HB333 Election Law – Disinformation on Large Social Media Platforms and Influence
Related to Voting
House Ways and Means Committee – February 6, 2024
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2024 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of HB333. This bill requires large social media platforms to make reasonable efforts to prevent, detect, and remove accounts and posts that communicate election disinformation in Maryland, defined as incorrect or misleading information about election procedures, election results or voting rights in Maryland. It also requires these platforms to report such communications to the State Board of Elections, which is then given certain duties regarding the reported information. This bill also amends Maryland law addressing offenses related to voting by defining the existing term "influence" to include using pressure, deception, and trickery to affect a voting decision by disseminating false information regarding the time, place, or manner of an election.

Disinformation is a cancer on democracy, and we cannot ignore the threat it poses as we approach the 2024 elections, which are likely to be highly contentious. According to a Brookings Institution 2022 report, "[o]ne of the drivers of decreased confidence in the political system has been the explosion of misinformation deliberately aimed at disrupting the democratic process."¹ According to a January 2024 NBC News review, "...[d]isinformation poses an unprecedented threat to democracy in the United States in 2024." NBC further states that "social media companies have slashed efforts to rein in misinformation on their platforms..."² Thirty-one states have enacted or have introduced legislation to counteract false election information.³ HB333 is both timely and crucial. Holding large social media platforms accountable for their role in disseminating election disinformation protects voters and supports a well-functioning democracy. Ensuring that criminal penalties attach to dissemination of false information designed to affect a voting decision is a vital protection that Maryland voters need and deserve.

We ask for your support for HB333 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Tazeen Ahmad
WDC President

Ginna Ingram
WDC Advancing Democracy in
Maryland Subcommittee

Cynthia Rubenstein
Chair, WDC Advocacy

¹ [Misinformation is eroding the public's confidence in democracy | Brookings](#)

² [Disinformation poses an unprecedented threat in 2024, and the U.S. isn't ready \(nbcnews.com\)](#)

³ [Tracker: State Legislation on Deepfakes in Elections - Public Citizen](#)