

HOUSE BILL 554

G1

2lr1843

By: **Delegate Rosenberg**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2022

Assigned to: Ways and Means

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Election Law – Petitions – Signatures**

3 FOR the purpose of altering the manner in which an individual is required to sign a
4 petition; altering the circumstances under which signatures on a petition must be
5 validated and counted or invalidated; repealing the prohibition on a person willfully
6 and knowingly signing a petition more than once; and generally relating to
7 signatures on petitions.

8 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
9 Article – Election Law
10 Section 6–203 and 16–401
11 Annotated Code of Maryland
12 (2017 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

13 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
14 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

15 **Article – Election Law**

16 6–203.

17 (a) To sign a petition, an individual shall:

18 (1) sign the individual’s name [as it appears on the statewide voter
19 registration list or the individual’s surname of registration and at least one full given name
20 and the initials of any other names] **IN INK**; and

21 (2) include the following information, printed or typed, in the spaces
22 provided:

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



- 1 (i) the signer's name as it was signed;
- 2 (ii) the signer's address;
- 3 (iii) the date of signing; and
- 4 (iv) other information required by regulations adopted by the State
- 5 Board.

6 (b) The signature of an individual shall be validated and counted if:

7 (1) the requirements of subsection (a) of this section have been satisfied;

8 **(2) THE IDENTITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL REASONABLY CAN BE**

9 **DETERMINED USING THE INFORMATION REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS**

10 **SECTION;**

11 **[(2)] (3)** the individual is a registered voter assigned to the county

12 specified on the signature page and, if applicable, in a particular geographic area of the

13 county;

14 **[(3)** the individual has not previously signed the same petition;]

15 (4) the signature is attested by an affidavit appearing on the page on which

16 the signature appears;

17 (5) the date accompanying the signature is not later than the date of the

18 affidavit on the page; and

19 (6) if applicable, the signature was affixed within the requisite period of

20 time, as specified by law.

21 **(C) (1) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, IF**

22 **THE ELECTION AUTHORITY REASONABLY CAN CONFIRM THE IDENTITY OF AN**

23 **INDIVIDUAL, THE ELECTION AUTHORITY MAY NOT INVALIDATE THE INDIVIDUAL'S**

24 **SIGNATURE BECAUSE THE INDIVIDUAL SIGNED A PETITION USING A DERIVATIVE OF**

25 **THE INDIVIDUAL'S GIVEN NAME.**

26 **(2) IF AN INDIVIDUAL'S SURNAME ON A PETITION DOES NOT EXACTLY**

27 **MATCH THE INDIVIDUAL'S SURNAME AS IT APPEARS IN THE INDIVIDUAL'S VOTER**

28 **REGISTRATION RECORD, THE ELECTION AUTHORITY SHALL INVALIDATE THE**

29 **INDIVIDUAL'S SIGNATURE.**

30 **(D) IF AN INDIVIDUAL SIGNS THE SAME PETITION MORE THAN ONCE:**

1 **(1) THE FIRST SIGNATURE OF THAT INDIVIDUAL TO BE VALIDATED**
2 **SHALL BE COUNTED; AND**

3 **(2) ANY SUBSEQUENT SIGNATURE OF THAT INDIVIDUAL ON THE SAME**
4 **PETITION SHALL BE INVALIDATED.**

5 **[(c)] (E)** (1) A signature may be removed:

6 (i) by the signer upon written application to the election authority
7 with which the petition will be filed if the application is received by the election authority
8 prior to the filing of that signature; or

9 (ii) prior to the filing of that signature, by the circulator who attested
10 to that signature or by the sponsor of the petition, if it is concluded that the signature does
11 not satisfy the requirements of this title.

12 (2) A signature removed pursuant to paragraph (1)(ii) of this subsection
13 may not be included in the number of signatures stated on the information page included
14 in the petition.

15 16–401.

16 (a) A person may not willfully and knowingly:

17 (1) give, transfer, promise, or offer anything of value for the purpose of
18 inducing another person to sign or not sign any petition;

19 (2) request, receive, or agree to receive, anything of value as an inducement
20 to sign or not to sign any petition;

21 (3) misrepresent any fact for the purpose of inducing another person to sign
22 or not to sign any petition;

23 (4) sign the name of any other person to a petition;

24 (5) falsify any signature or purported signature to a petition;

25 (6) obtain, or attempt to obtain, any signature to a petition by fraud,
26 duress, or force;

27 (7) circulate, cause to be circulated, or file with an election authority a
28 petition that contains any false, forged, or fictitious signatures;

29 (8) sign a petition that the person is not legally qualified to sign; **OR**

30 (9) [sign a petition more than once; or

1 (10)] alter any petition after it is filed with the election authority.

2 (b) Each violation of this section shall be considered a separate offense.

3 (c) A person who violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and is subject to
4 the penalties provided in Subtitle 10 of this title.

5 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
6 January 1, 2023.