

# Nancy K. Kopp

February 6, 2020

Hon. Paul Pinsky, Chair  
Hon. Cheryl Kagan, Vice-Chair  
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Committee,

I write to you today, not as Maryland State Treasurer, but as a citizen of the State of Maryland, a proud title we all share — and as one who has been actively involved in our elections since 1964, first as a volunteer, then a voter and candidate.

The 2020 elections are the most critical in our lifetime and, perhaps, in our Nation's history. The choices before us will be clear and stark; the consequences will impact every citizen, family and community in America. Emotions run high, and confidence in our electoral system has been shaken. The average citizen's concern and distrust will not only grow, but will be manipulated and used as a political tool itself.

Because these are not normal times, I strongly urge you to consider the coming election process and the issue of the new wireless system with even more caution and concern than usual. The experience in Maryland's 7th District Special Primary, which led the State Board of Elections to halt use of the new wireless network system, and the fiasco in Iowa the next day, have exacerbated distrust in the system. Our election administrators, whom I respect greatly, express a confidence that with proper further study, re-examination of the Special Primary, and tweaking of the system, if needed, all will be well for the use of this new apparatus in the April Primaries and November election. They assure us that the system is secure and safe. If this were a normal year, my inclination would be to follow their guidance and trust in their experience.

But this is not a normal year. I urge you most strongly to positively consider the proposal to simply postpone the mandate to speed up election result reporting and canvassing of absentee votes, as SB 362 allows. The need to sustain trust and encourage confidence is simply more important this year than the benefit of accelerated reporting.

As your representative on the Board of Public Works, I must acknowledge that the members of the Board have in the past strongly urged the Administrator to speed up reporting, and have strongly criticized long lines and other problems at particular polling places. And, while we have praised and congratulated the Administrator and Board when things went smoothly and expeditiously, at times the pressure may have outweighed the praise. If so, we, too, bear some responsibility for forcing the move to technology. This is a year for calm resolution and deliberate action, not a year to experiment with new technology which

may, or may not speed the move to absentee canvassing by a day or two — and may, or may not, further undermine confidence.

The administrators say that the new system will be fixed and that all will be secure. They might be right, but — please — do not test it in the elections this year. Let's wait and focus this year on making sure that all eligible voters are encouraged to vote and have confidence that their votes are being counted accurately. That, after all, is the most important task before us all.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,

*Nancy K. Kopp*

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Cc: Senator Jack Bailey  
Senator Mary Beth Carozza  
Senator Arthur Ellis  
Senator Jason C. Gallion  
Senator Katie Fry-Hester  
Senator Clarence K. Lam  
Senator Obie Patterson  
Senator Bryan W. Simonaire  
Senator Mary Washington