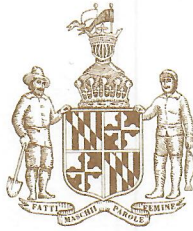


CHERYL C. KAGAN  
Legislative District 17  
Montgomery County

—  
Vice Chair  
Education, Health, and  
Environmental Affairs Committee

—  
Joint Audit Committee  
Joint Committee on Federal Relations



Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Suite 2 West  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
301-858-3134 · 410-841-3134  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3134  
Fax 301-858-3665 · 410-841-3665  
Cheryl.Kagan@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SB362: Election Law - Absentee Ballots - Timing of Canvass  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Hearing: Thursday, February 6, 2020, 1:00 PM**

The State Board of Elections (SBE) is proposing to expand wirelessly networking epollbooks solely for the State's six largest counties in order to transmit real-time voter registration changes. This would create an unnecessary security risk to our elections. This unfunded mandate, which would have cost \$1.8 million, never had a public debate or vote, either by SBE Board members or at the Board of Public Works.

SB362 would simply extend the time when local boards can first open absentee ballots from the Wednesday after Election Day at 8am to the Friday after Election Day. Giving local boards additional time removes the justification for using the dangerous and untested technology. I am flexible on the specific timing of the absentee ballot canvass and defer to the wisdom of the local boards.

A wireless network on Election Day increases the danger of hacking. Why use unneeded technology that only increases the vulnerability of our elections when there is a simple alternative? Additionally, this unfunded mandate lacked any degree of transparency and was forced upon the six largest counties. Wireless epollbooks are used during early voting, with a smaller number of locations to support if something goes wrong. Montgomery County only has 11 early voting sites that can be reasonably staffed, but there are 258 precincts on Election Day, which would be an impossible task to maintain. It is exponentially more difficult and expensive to manage thousands of precincts statewide.

Yesterday, the SBE revealed serious problems in Tuesday's Special Election caused by this risky new technology mandated by the State Board of Elections. The epollbooks were taken offline in Howard County because the networks were running too slowly. Baltimore City and Baltimore County were disconnected by 7pm. In 2016, the presidential primary brought more than 1.4 million voters to the polls. With only 60,000 voters on Tuesday, we can only imagine the technological disaster that awaits us in April if this system is implemented statewide.

Just this week, we watched the Iowa Democratic Party try to implement a new app with the goal of making the caucus more efficient. You didn't have to be there, as I was, to be stunned at how fundamentally something can go wrong when too much faith is placed in an untested technology.

Montgomery County has proposed a friendly amendment that would clarify COMAR regulations and give counties greater flexibility to begin the canvass process. Local boards would have a 24-hour window to begin opening and counting the absentee ballots, rather than a specific time that they must begin.

SB362 has been introduced as emergency legislation to stop the use of wireless technology before the 2020 presidential election. It is imperative that we take action to protect voters' confidence in Maryland's elections.

I urge a favorable report for SB362.