

ALICE CAIN
Legislative District 30A
Anne Arundel County

Ways and Means Committee
Education Subcommittee
Election Law Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 154
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3211 · 301-858-3211
800-492-7122 Ext. 3211
Alice.Cain@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

In Support of HB465
Election Law - Campaign Material - Disclosure of the Use of Bots

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB465, a bill by myself and Delegate Rosenberg to fight the growing use of ‘bots’ on social media to try to influence elections. Social media ‘bot’ technology lets users use artificial intelligence technology to program unmanned accounts to interact with real ones in online conversation. An estimated 50 million Twitter accounts, or 15 percent of all Twitter users, are bots.¹

Since my video on deepfakes was well-received, I now have a short informational video on bots.

VIDEO

In the 2016 Presidential Election, a number of bots were used to promote and attack both major General Election candidates. Using AI technology to appear like a real user, these bots were able to circulate inaccurate information on social media to unknowing followers. The result was the mass-belief of these inaccuracies circulated by nefarious political actors.

I don’t have to tell you that this is detrimental to our democracy.

HB465 simply requires campaign-affiliated bot users to include standard campaign disclosures on all bot-published posts.

Those who fail to do so can be punished in accordance with campaign finance law. With this change, Maryland voters will know whether social media posts are being posted by a person, or by a bot.

As far as we know, this is the first legislation of its kind, and Delegate Rosenberg and I hope it will lead the way for other states and the federal government to take action against malicious political bots.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on this bill.

¹ <https://aaai.org/ocs/index.php/ICWSM/ICWSM17/paper/view/15587>