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FACSIMILE NO.

WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NO.

410-576-6584

February 23, 2022

TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Hannibal G. Williams II Kemerer
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: SB 413 – Voting Rights Act of 2022 – Counties and Municipalities – **Support**

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and distinguished members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, we write to urge your favorable report on Senate Bill 413. This legislation, introduced by Senator Sydnor, would prohibit methods for electing county governing bodies from impairing the ability of protected classes to elect candidates of the members' choice, or the members' ability to influence the outcome of an election through dilution or abridgement of the rights of voters who are members of a protected class.

In short, SB 413 would import the requirements of Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act ("VRA") of 1965¹ into State law, as applied to county and municipal elections, and authorize the Attorney General to enforce it. Since the federal VRA already applies to local elections, and since private enforcement of the federal VRA is already available, the significant change this bill works would be to empower the Attorney General to investigate and enforce these similar provisions under State law at the county and municipal level.

We think so empowering the Attorney General is a laudatory goal and that our Office could enforce the provisions with existing resources. Therefore, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 413.

cc: Committee Members

¹¹ See, 79 Stat. 437, as amended, 52 U.S.C. § 10301, (formerly codified at 42 U.S.C. § 1973).