



**Barbara Noveau, Executive Director, DoTheMostGood**

**Committee:** Ways and Means

**Testimony on:** HB0035 – State Board of Elections – Contracts and Invoices – Requirements

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** February 1, 2022

**Bill Contact:** Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grassroots organization with more than 3000 members who live in a wide range of communities—primarily in Montgomery County—from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that help ensure equity in voting, civil rights, education, and criminal justice; access to healthcare, transportation, and housing; and promote positive and trusting relationships between our communities and our state and local governments.

DTMG supports HB0035 because, in view of the amount of voter suppression and politicizing of elections occurring in over 19 state legislatures across the country, it is never too soon to codify fair practices and accountability for state boards of election. An important aspect of that accountability is in the transparency and fairness of contracting and invoicing of election-related business.

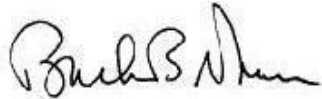
By requiring the State Board to review and vote on each contract with a value of \$50,000 or more; requiring the State Administrator to report each proposed contract, renewal and change order to the State Board, and by specifying the information to be reported by the State Board to the Board of Public Works regarding contracts, this bill increases oversight of the State Board of Elections, which, as noted above, is important to secure the safety and fairness of our elections.

Transparency and oversight are essential to a trusted government. There is a history in Maryland of significant contracts being signed without discussion or approval. One of the most notable recent incidents occurred in the runup to the 2020 elections, when Maryland's ballot printing contractor abruptly backed out less than 60 days before the presidential election, and staff signed a contract with another vendor with consulting or informing the Board beforehand.

To ensure consistency across the state, this bill codifies that the costs of goods and services mandated by the State Board must be shared 50%/50% between the State and the Counties, while costs incurred by counties not mandated by the State Board are the responsibility of the Local Board(s). Previously, uncodified language on how much counties must pay towards election costs left local boards without protection against unfunded mandates. This was what happened in 2020 when Governor Hogan directed the State Board to send an application for a ballot, rather than the ballot itself, to every voter. The extra postage and staff time, both unfunded, posed a fiscal burden on counties.

Therefore, DTMG strongly supports HB0035 and urges a FAVORABLE report on this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Noveau".

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