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To: The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbary
Chair, Ways and Means Committee

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

Re: HB 30 – Election Law – Polling Sites – Firearms Prohibitions

The Office of Attorney General urges this Committee to report favorably Delegate Henson's HB 30. This legislation makes pellucidly clear that no one can carry or display a firearm at, or within 100 feet of, a polling place during an election. If enacted, those who violate the statute would be subject to a civil penalty of up to \$5,000.

The 2020 election and its aftermath illustrated that passions run high across the country. Permitting individuals to display or carry firearms in the context of high passions and a deeply divided electorate is a recipe for disaster. Moreover, the presence of armed individuals at polls causes voter intimidation and coercion.¹ House Bill 30 is an appropriate means to deter such voter intimidation.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 30.

¹ See Mark Berman, *Guns at voting sites emerge as flash point in Michigan amid nationwide election tension*, Wash. Post (Oct. 26, 2020), available online at https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/guns-at-voting-sites-emerge-as-flash-point-in-michigan-amid-nationwide-election-tension/2020/10/26/27c72488-17ce-11eb-82db-60b15c874105_story.html (quoting UCLA Professor Adam Winkler for the proposition that "Polling places are not the kind of place where firearms are likely to do any good. . . and given the history of voter intimidation in America . . . it'd be best to prohibit guns in polling places."); Arit John, *Can people carry guns into polling places? You might be surprised*, LA Times (Oct. 26, 2020), <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2020-10-20/guns-in-polling-places> ("Growing activity from armed far-right groups and President Trump's calls for his supporters to watch polling places 'very carefully' have raised concerns of possible disruptions or voter intimidation ahead of the Nov. 3 election.").

cc: Members of the Ways and Means Committee