



February 25, 2022

House Ways and Means Committee

HB 1089 – Election Law – Registered Voter List Security and Electronic Signature Requirements for Petitions

Position – Favorable

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee

The Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition (BTEC) urges you to act favorably on HB 1089.

Each day, mainstream and special niche news and social media channels record the disturbing status of democratic institutions and respect for full enfranchisement. The issue at every turn is the removal or maintenance of arbitrary obstacles and conditions that threaten the exercise of the franchise.

Electronic signature technology has been in use with proven security from fraud and misuse over a decade in business and official governmental documents and transactions. BTEC is seeking the removal of the in-person requirement blocking the use of the electronic signature protocol that has already been used in the state of Maryland for ballot access petition campaigns.

BTEC has collected over 1,000 electronic petitions with electronic signatures for submission by August 1, 2022 in meeting the 10,000 valid petition requirement for our local ballot access petition to amend the Baltimore City charter. We collected those petition signatures electronically before May 25, 2021 when the extension for use of the electronic signature protocol expired. Since then, our petition campaign has been saddled with unnecessarily oppressive labor and time-consuming logistical demands.

With our experience, only one conclusion can be drawn: The expiration of the use of the electronic signature protocol has made it difficult for those who want to support our campaign. They must now navigate a landscape marked by health advisories and personal anxieties occasioned by the once-in-a-century health crisis affecting the entire globe. They have been restricted in their exercise of the franchise.

HB 1089 is a voting rights bill. Voting rights are directly associated with the duty of government at every level to represent the will of the duly certified voter. The arbitrary expiration of this facility immediately limits and diminishes the number of duly certified voters who can register their support for or against initiatives of importance to their interests – a right for which government is established and obligated to protect.

The Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition is confident that the Committee will expedite access to the exercise of the franchise rather than obstruct its exercise. We are confident that you will heed our appeal and vote favorably for the passage of the bill.

Samuel Jordan – President – Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition