



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter

**In Favor of SB89 - Elections - Ballot Questions - Publication of
Proposed Laws**

Before the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 16, 2023

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

SB89 requires ballot question language and affecting legislation be published on the Board of Elections website at least 65 days prior to the election, improving access to and transparency of information. This will allow voters to be better informed by providing full details and the actual item that they are being asked to adopt by ballot question.

Ballot questions are a critical and fundamental piece of democracy; when policy questions are so important, we put them to the test of the people. Despite their importance, voters often have the most confusion about the implications and effects, in part due to the lack of published information.

In 2022, there were five statewide ballot questions and several local questions proposed by the jurisdictions. All the statewide questions were overwhelmingly adopted, with the lowest approval being 62%, despite party registration percentages being much narrower, indicating a possible lack of awareness. While these questions were spread to voters in several channels, such as sample ballots, the affecting legislation was only accessible through digging through the General Assembly website—often requiring several hours. In some

past elections the Board of Elections had posted links to the affecting legislation, but this did not happen in 2022, further confusing voters. SB89 will ensure consistency and continuance across cycles.

Transparency in governance and elections is critical. We must ensure that the electorate is fully educated of the crucial decisions put before them. Publishing the questions will give voters time to familiarize and prepare themselves before they enter the ballot box. When voters are aware, they make more objective decisions and democracy works at its best.

I respectfully request a favorable report on SB89 so that we can empower the electorate to make informed decisions and build a stronger democracy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill P. Carter, Esq.