

TESTIMONY

HB1112

(Election Law - Ballot Petition Modernization Act)

House Ways and Means Committee

Oral Testimony

Tuesday, March 07, 2023

Annapolis, Maryland

1:00 pm

Good afternoon, Madam Chair Atterbeary, Madam Vice Chair Wilkins, honorable members of the House Ways and Means Committee. I am Sharon Y. Blake, a 45-year resident of Baltimore County and a retired 43-year career public school educator in the state of Maryland. As a senior citizen, I support House Bill 1112 with two friendly amendments. First, AMENDMENT 1-SECTION 2. Change the implementation date of HB1112 from October 1 to June 1, 2023 consistent with the effective date of HB 0645 Election Law - Electronic Ballot Return System - Study and Request for Proposals t

AMENDMENT 2 - 6-208.1. 17 (A) IN AN EFFORT TO ASSURE TRANSPARENCY IN THE PETITION PROCESS, A PETITION SPONSOR SHALL BE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO SUBMIT ONE TENTH OF THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF REQUIRED SIGNATURES TO THE LOCAL BOARD OF ELECTIONS FOR REVIEW AND FEEDBACK REGARDING THE SUFFICIENCY OF SIGNATURES COLLECTION IN AN EFFECT TO ASSURE ACCURACY AND COMPLETENESS OF ALL ADDITIONAL SIGNATURES. I also support HB 1112 with the two friendly amendments because the electronic ballot petition option prevents privacy rights from being violated since the petition's forms are generated with five sets of signatures on each page, each section of which requests the signer to volunteer his or her name, home address and date of birth to a total stranger. Additionally, the information is immediately available to the person's co-workers, church members, the next person signing the petition as well as anyone handling the petitions. My experiences in collecting signatures on a paper ballot has been one where many people declining to sign clearly stated their reluctance to leave their name, address and date of birth with a complete stranger. Since we live in the 21st Century, the electronic petition signature option should be made available given the fact that the technology already exists and it reflects the way many disabled people, seniors, and busy young adults wish to live, assuring each a greater opportunity to read and fully comprehend the proposed petition language. Moreover, House Bill 1112 will allow the great state of Maryland to join the progressive thinking of citizens of Massachusetts. Massachusetts on April 29, 2020, became the first state to allow campaigns to collect electronic signatures and remote signatures, specifically, the four active campaigns targeting the 2020 ballot. In closing, I thank Delegate Sheila Ruth, for her leadership and vision as the lead sponsor of House Bill 1112. I

urge this committee to favorably report House Bill 1112 with the two friendly amendments mentioned earlier in my testimony.

Respectfully Submitted:
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