

Testimony Against SB0480

Please vote against SB0480.

At first glance, who could be against a bill that is purportedly written to protect election workers? However, after reading it more closely, I think the bill should be defeated, or at least amended.

What is a threat and who decides? Is asking about election integrity considered threatening? This bill is not well defined or thought-out.... For example, "harm" is defined as serious injury or serious emotional distress. So does that mean one could make a threat to inflict minor injury or just insult them with "mean tweets"?

The fact that bill is specifically about election officials as opposed to all officials in general, is dangerous. Anytime the government tries to keep us "safe," it ends up doing just the opposite, or is meted out in a one-sided fashion, i.e., it will be okay to harass and intimidate Republican poll watchers but not Democrat poll watchers. Sadly, my colleague knows a Republican judge, an older lady who was intimidated and essentially run out of the polling place, so it happens. I want to support this bill but after watching the hearing for the sister bill HB0585, especially the last speaker, I cannot do it as the bill is currently written.

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Perhaps we could testify favorably with amendment if the following section from Maryland Code Section 3-805 (d) (Misuse of Electronic Communication or Interactive Service) was added. It states, "Subsection (b)(1) through (5) of this section does not apply to a peaceable activity: (1) intended to express a political view or provide information to others; or (2) conducted for a lawful purpose." According to testimony for HB0585, SB0480 used Section 3-805 (b)(2) to define harm as serious bodily injury or serious emotional distress. I am more than curious why the disclaimer quoted in this paragraph was omitted from HB0480 and HB0585.

Please vote against SB0480.

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