

Institute *for* Responsive Government Action

The Institute for Responsive Government Action respectfully submits the following testimony in support of Senate Bill 480, the Protecting Election Officials Act of 2024:

Senate Bill 480 would **provide necessary protections for election officials who face unprecedented threats while performing their essential duties of administering free and fair elections**. As such, the Institute for Responsive Government Action wholeheartedly supports the passage of Senate Bill 480.

In the past two years, **numerous states across the political spectrum have passed laws increasing protections for election workers against threats, intimidation, and other risks** that may occur in the course of their duties.

Like House Bill 585, these laws often include provisions that make it a crime to threaten, intimidate, or harass an election official based on their role in administering the elections process.

This includes states like Oklahoma (SB 481), Arkansas (HB 1457), Minnesota (HF 3), New Mexico (SB 43), Nevada (SB 406), Colorado (HB 1273), and Vermont (S 265).

Threats to election officials not only harm election officials themselves, but also negatively impact the voter experience and the smooth running of elections.

National surveys of elections officials report that **threats and harassment contribute to turnover of experienced elections administrators**. Similarly, threats and harassment make it **more difficult to recruit pollworkers** and other temporary election workers.¹

¹ See, e.g., Brennan Center for Justice, [Poll of Election Officials Shows High Turnover Amid Safety Threats and Political Interference](#) (2023).

With this bill, the Maryland General Assembly has the opportunity to protect the public servants responsible for ensuring that elections remain free and fair.

Thank you for your consideration,

Alex Tischenko
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Institute for Responsive Government Action

The Institute for Responsive Government Action is dedicated to ensuring state and federal governments work effectively for the very people they serve. Responsive Gov Action works to provide legislative advice and action, polling, and testimony in order to find practical policy solutions that make government systems more efficient, accessible, and responsive for everyday Americans.