

HB0775 Comments by Michael Fletcher, Derwood, MD

This bill should be shelved. It is unnecessary, wasteful, and poses a risk to our voting system.

This bill is unnecessary. There is no need for an electronic method of voting for disabled persons or anyone else. Maryland already has mail-in voting for those who do not want to go to the polls. It is no more difficult for a disabled person to request and fill out a mail-in ballot than to fill out an electronic ballot. They can even get a blank mail-in ballot automatically without asking. Also, if the disabled person wants special treatment or additional help in voting, he or she can simply take county transportation to a polling place where the election workers have been trained to assist disabled persons or request that a person certified by the Local Board of Elections (LBE) provide assistance.

This bill is wasteful because it would establish another layer of voting process over and above the methods available now that are sufficient for assisting disabled persons to vote. The Local Boards of Election (LBEs) are busy enough now. This bill would likely require additional taxpayer funds to support the additional effort required at the LBEs.

Perhaps the most important reason for defeating this bill is the risk it would pose to our voting system. The electronic scanners used in Maryland are computers that operate on software that is programmed to capture and count the selections made by a voter on a ballot. This bill would facilitate bad actors tampering with elections by making it easier to hack into the voting system. Once in the system, a hacker could alter the software to manipulate the choices of voters in any way possible. An October 2023 audit of the State Board of Elections by the Maryland Office of Legislative Audits stated that alterations to the scanner software could even change the selection made by a voter to flip a vote from one candidate to another. The online ballot marking tool envisioned by this bill would provide another avenue of attack by cyber-criminals. In the age of Volt Typhoon, the Legislature should not make it easier to hack our voting system.

For these reasons, HB0775 should be voted down.