

TESTIMONY HB 1109

My name is Tom Glancy. I am a Towson resident. Please consider this my written testimony in support of HB 1109.

My encounters as a petition circulator with hundreds of MD voters who have either signed or declined to sign the 4MORE4BALTIMORE petition seeking County Council expansion leads me to support HB 1109, the Ballot Petition Modernization Act.

It is past time to bring the petition process into the 21st Century, as HB 1109 does. Its provision establishing an electronic signature option, standing alone, will allow voters who have been effectively shut out of the petition process to finally become fuller participants in our democracy.

Because current law requires citizens to sign paper petitions, most signatures are collected at outdoor public events—where the people are. That in itself can shut out the disabled, the elderly, and anyone else who are unable to attend such events, effectively preventing them from fully exercising their right to petition their government.

Even with those voters who are able to attend such events and sign paper petitions, many balk at providing private identifying information that will be visible to others.

In this age of mounting concerns over identity theft, I have encountered many voters who have initially voiced support for our petition, only to eventually refuse to provide a sample of their signature, reveal their date of birth, or provide their address.

Finally, many voters have told me, quite reasonably, that they want to study the issue before deciding whether or not to sign the petition. That is something that they now will be able to do thanks to the electronic signature option, assuming HB 1109 becomes law.

We live in an increasingly online world, and with that comes the expectation that online options be made available. The electronic petition signature option should be made available to all voters because the technology for it exists and it reflects the way most disabled people, seniors, and busy young adults wish to live, assuring each voter a greater opportunity to read and fully understand proposed petition language. It is faster, more convenient, far more accurate than paper petitions, and far less costly in terms of local and state election time and effort.