



Maryland Forward Party

January 31, 2025

Maryland Forward Party

PJ Benenati, Chair

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SB 0267:

Election Law - Petitions for the Formation of a New Political Party - Process

Position: Unfavorable

Dear Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Forward Party and our 6,000 Maryland supporters. Forward Party is among the fastest growing political organizations in the United States and in Maryland. Though our organization has only existed for 2 years in Maryland, we saw a positive 39% growth from 2024 to 2025. Our organization is dedicated to protecting and enhancing our democracy and among our core values is our belief that all voices wanting to participate in our political process should be heard. This belief comes with the understanding that procedures can and should be in place to help identify legitimate political entities from those groups less serious about governing and political representation.

Maryland state law currently contains clear requirements to gain and maintain ballot access, including blackout windows of time where petition signatures are not permitted to be submitted, during statewide election years.



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SB 0267 is proposing to expand this submission blackout window by a month, beginning in July instead of August. Maryland Forward Party would rather not increase this blackout window and would hope to instead maintain or decrease this window. Our organization, while understanding the immense workload on the state board of elections during an election year, believes that the bar for entry and to maintain ballot access is already incredibly demanding and our concern is that this proposed revision increases this difficulty and unnecessarily increases the barrier for entry. We do not believe that personnel or workload restrictions within the board of election should negatively impact the potential for the formation of a new or previously established political party. Board of Elections processes should ideally not be altered in a way that negatively impacts Maryland's democratic process and potentially limits the voices and representation of Maryland Voters.

Respectfully

PJ Benenati

Maryland Forward Party, Chair

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