

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

February 11, 2025

HB 740 – Election Law – Campaign Materials – Disclosure of Use of Synthetic Media

Position: SUPPORT

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the Protection & Advocacy agency in Maryland, mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM works to increase opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities to be part of their communities through voting. DRM submits the written testimony in support of House Bill 740.

As generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology becomes more widespread, so does the risk of misleading or deceptive content about politicians and political activity. This bill aims to protect Marylanders by preventing the use of AI-generated media to create and spread false or misleading narratives. HB 740 would require the disclosure of AI in campaign materials, an important step in providing protection for Maryland voters.

Statistics show that voters are concerned with the use of AI technology to influence elections. Polls conducted by Ipsos¹ and YouGov² have shown that 70%-85% of individuals are concerned about the role AI deepfakes and other AI generated content in the spread of misinformation. Though AI technology has become even more accessible to the public in recent years, a study conducted by the Rand Corporation³ has found that 27%-50% of individuals struggle to distinguish between deepfakes and real images or content.

¹ <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/americans-hold-mixed-opinions-ai-and-fear-its-potential-disrupt-society-drive-misinformation>

² <https://today.yougov.com/technology/articles/46058-majorities-americans-are-concerned-about-spread-ai>

³ https://www.rand.org/pubs/external_publications/EP70217.html

Misleading deepfake content poses a serious threat to many Marylanders, including many people with disabilities. While many are misled by deepfakes, those with fewer resources to verify information—such as individuals with cognitive disabilities or those who rely on assistive technology—face heightened risks. Additionally, bad actors could deliberately target certain communities with disinformation and misinformation, further restricting those individuals' ability to participate fully in the democratic process.

HB 740 provides crucial protections against ongoing efforts to undermine Maryland's electoral system. It is essential for the General Assembly to prioritize this legislation and ensure that all Marylanders, including those with disabilities, can engage in an electoral process free from misinformation and deception.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report on HB 740. Please do not hesitate to contact me BradenS@DisabilityRightsMD.org or 410-929-6859.

Respectfully submitted,

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