



TESTIMONY FOR HB0525 Election Law Influence on a Voter's Voting Decision By Use of Fraud - Prohibition

Bill Sponsor: Delegates Feldmark

Committee: Ways and Means

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0525 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

In addition to championing socially beneficial bills like HB0525, MLC's mission is to inform voters about such legislation and their legislators. We refuse to let our efforts be undermined by election disinformation. HB0525 bolsters our mission by outright banning the use of synthetic media to commit fraud.

HB0525 expands the definition of "fraud" in existing legislation to include broader prohibitions against using synthetic media to influence voters. Synthetic media, as defined in HB0525, includes images, audio recordings, or video recordings that have been intentionally created or manipulated using generative artificial intelligence or other digital technology to create realistic but false representations.

Synthetic media is a campaign manager's dream. It's cheap, highly targetable, and often aimed at low-information and disadvantaged voters. Claims can be made without attribution or liability. During election season, the issue of synthetic media becomes even more dangerous. We vote based on what we see and hear, and synthetic media changes the playing field for any candidate.

We form opinions based on what we see, always presuming it to be real. This can be dangerous even in the best of times, as synthetically generated images, videos, and audio are designed to provoke reactions, including anger and fear, which some people act upon.

It makes sense that the purveyors of fraudulent synthetic media are liable to the same penalties as other deceitful actors in the election process.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition supports this bill and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee.