



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary
Chairman

House Ways and Means Committee, February 11, 2025

HB730- Election Law – Online Platforms and Qualifying Paid Digital Communications – 3 Alterations

Favorable

Support Testimony for HB730 Election Law – Online Platforms and Qualifying Paid Digital Communications – Alterations

Good afternoon, Chairman Atterbeary, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB730. This legislation addresses critical changes to Maryland's law requiring social media platforms to report on political advertising. Passed in the 2018 Legislative session, HB981- Online Electioneering Transparency and Accountability Act required greater levels of transparency for online political ads. While the law's original intent was to increase transparency and prevent foreign interference in our elections—a goal I fully support—it has also created unintended challenges for platforms, advertisers, and the democratic process itself. HB730 seeks to address these challenges while maintaining the law's core goals of accountability and transparency.

Why is this bill necessary?

The 2018 law led Google to ban political ads entirely, citing the technical difficulties of complying with its requirements. While major advertisers successfully challenged the law in court and are now exempt from its provisions, local government candidates and those running smaller campaigns remain unable to advertise. This leaves them at a significant disadvantage.

This bill aims to create a level playing field, protect the First Amendment rights of all candidates, and uphold the transparency envisioned in the 2018 law. It's important to note that the platforms have addressed the issue of transparency. For example, on Google, you can see political ads running across the country and the committee paying for them. <https://adstransparency.google.com/?region=US>

As technology evolves, our laws and regulations must adapt accordingly. HB730 addresses the challenges arising from the 2018 law and the lawsuit requiring social media platforms to report on political advertising. By creating a level playing field for all platforms and upholding their First Amendment rights, this bill ensures a fair and transparent democratic process.

In conclusion, I urge you for a favorable report on HB730.