

To: Senator Kagan and Delegate Korman

From: Cassandra Okwumabua, Member, Calvert County Board of Elections

Subject: Letter of Support for the Local Boards of Election Transparency Act

Dear Senator Kagan and Delegate Korman,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Local Boards of Election Transparency Act, a crucial legislation that will significantly benefit the citizens of Calvert County and local Boards of Elections across the state, enhancing their trust and confidence in the electoral process.

Our community is increasingly vocal about the need for greater transparency in local election board meetings. This demand is evident in the numerous requests for these meetings to be recorded, a request that is consistently voiced during the open comment period after our business meetings. Residents often question why these meetings are not recorded when numerous other county meetings are. Moreover, many individuals are unable to attend due to work commitments, long commutes, or the need to take leave to participate via Zoom while teleworking.

This bill will ensure that citizens have the same level of access and engagement as they do with other recorded county meetings. The Board of County Commissioners, Board of Appeals, Calvert County Planning Commission, Community Resources, Planning and Zoning, Police Accountability Board, Office on Aging, and Technology Services, among others, already provide recorded meetings that are made available on the County's Video on Demand page, administered by Communications & Media Relations – Calvert Broadcast. Our local Board of Elections should be afforded the same level of transparency and accessibility.

Additionally, the State Board of Elections already records and archives its meetings, providing public access to past board meetings, agendas, and minutes dating back to January 25, 2017. This precedent further underscores the importance of making election-related discussions available to the public at the state and local levels.

It's worth noting that the Calvert County Board of Elections has recently taken a positive step by approving the posting of its approved minutes on its website, starting with the June 26, 2024, minutes. While this is a commendable move, recorded meetings would further enhance accessibility, civic engagement, and public trust in the electoral process.

I want to express my sincere gratitude for your sponsorship of this critical legislation and your unwavering commitment to transparency and accountability. Your leadership in ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to stay informed and engaged with their local Boards of Elections is truly commendable.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Okwumabua

Member, Calvert County Board of Elections