TESTIMONY FOR HB0740
Election Law – Campaign Materials - Disclosure of Use of Synthetic Media

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Kaiser
Committee: Ways and Means
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair
Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0740 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.

What is real anymore? With the advent of electronic media and AI, it is too hard to tell if what you are seeing is real or artificially generated, or even spliced together from something that was real. We form opinions based on what we see, and we always presume that what we are seeing is the real thing. This can be dangerous in the best of times, since synthetically generated images, video and audio are designed to produce a reaction, including anger and fear and some people act on those emotions.

During election season, the issue of synthetic media becomes even more dangerous. We are voting based on what we see and hear, so it is changing the playing field for any given candidate.

This bill, if enacted, would require any entity that publishes synthetic media to clearly mark it as such. This will include all forms of media – still images, audio and video. Our members believe that disclosure of synthetic media is vitally important to our democratic process.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.