



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change

The Protection and Advocacy System for the State of Maryland

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SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Senate Bill 727: Municipal Elections – Qualified Electronic
Transmission Systems – Authorization for Use
February 25, 2026
Position: Support (with Amendments)

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the State’s Protection and Advocacy agency, dedicated to advancing and protecting the civil rights of people with disabilities. As part of that mandate, DRM works to ensure that Marylanders with disabilities can fully and equally participate in the electoral process. DRM submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 727, with amendments.

For many Marylanders with disabilities, voting still remains far more difficult than it should be. Senate Bill 727 would allow Maryland municipalities to opt in to secure mobile voting for local elections. Federal law, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), requires that voting systems and polling places provide meaningful access to individuals with disabilities. Yet practical barriers remain, preventing full participation in our democracy.

In particular, many voters with print disabilities—including individuals who are blind, have low vision, or certain cognitive or dexterity impairments—are unable to mark a paper ballot independently and privately. Too often, these voters must rely on assistance from poll workers, family members, or aides, which can undermine the fundamental right to cast a private ballot.

Secure mobile voting has the potential to address these barriers meaningfully. When implemented with strong safeguards, it can allow voters with disabilities to cast their ballots independently, privately, and securely, using assistive technologies they already rely on in their daily lives. This legislation is not intended to replace existing voting options but to expand access, ensuring that no voter is excluded because the current system fails to meet their needs.

We respectfully request that the bill be amended to explicitly require accessibility for voters with disabilities. Specifically, we propose adding a new element in the definition of “Qualified Electronic Transmission System,” (Section 4-107.1(A) pg.2 line 8), as follows:

(8) Accessibility to voters with disabilities, including compatibility with commonly used assistive technologies and compliance with applicable digital accessibility standards for federal, state, and local governments.

This amendment provides clarity for municipalities and election officials, ensuring that accessibility obligations are implemented, and that municipal elections are equitable for all voters. Explicit statutory language ensures that all voters with disabilities, including voters who are blind, low-vision, Deaf or hard of hearing, have print disabilities, or cognitive disabilities, can vote privately and independently. Anchoring accessibility to recognized digital standards ensures protections remain consistent and durable, even if federal or state technical standards evolve. Requiring compatibility with assistive technologies ensures practical usability for all voters.

Although Senate Bill 727 represents an important step toward expanding voting access in Maryland, it is essential to emphasize that this effort must not be viewed as a substitute for the ongoing obligation to ensure that all physical polling places remain fully accessible and that all voters can cast their ballots privately and independently in person on election day. Voting is a personal experience, and some voters prefer in-person voting for a variety of reasons. Further, not all voters have access to reliable technology, or internet.

Maryland must continue to explore and implement accessibility improvements across all voting methods to accommodate the needs of individuals with diverse disabilities. Ensuring that every Marylander can vote securely, privately, and independently should remain a central priority in election policy. Access to the ballot is a bipartisan principle that strengthens our democracy and affirms the fundamental right to participate in civic life. **For these reasons, DRM requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 727 with amendments.**

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