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Michael C. O'Connor
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FREDERICK

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Maryland State Senate
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 2140

Re: SB0727: Municipal Elections - Qualified Electronic Transmission Systems - Authorization for Use

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Committee,

The City of Frederick supports SB727 and its efforts to allow municipal elections to be conducted through the use of a qualified electronic transmission system.

This bill allows municipalities, such as Frederick, to modernize and expand their voting system by legally allowing them to adopt a secure electronic ballot transmission system for municipal races, if they can procure or build systems that meet these standards. HB1066 enables voters facing mobility challenges, disabilities, transportation barriers, or irregular work schedules to participate remotely using a secure platform.

SB727 ensures that security and data privacy are at the forefront with the integration of these systems, mandating security auditability, end-to-end encryption, biometric or equivalent digital identity verification technologies, and production of a paper voting record. These requirements are aimed at ensuring that remote marking and transmission of ballots maintains ballot secrecy, integrity, and verifiability.

Included in SB727 is a narrow data usage clause, only allowing for participant data to be used for election administration such as ballot processing and for voter participation statistics. It prohibits repurposing that data for campaigning, commercial use, or other non-election functions, which is a significant privacy concern given the sensitivity of biometric and identity data.

Overall, SB727 equips Maryland municipalities with the tools to modernize elections for upcoming cycles, supporting local democracy in a digital age.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Connor