



BILL: SB 727

POSITION: INFO – Letter of Information

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

DATE: February 23, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Maryland Department of Disabilities
217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300, Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Chair Feldman,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is submitting a letter of information for **SB 727, Municipal Elections – Qualified Electronic Transmission Systems – Authorization for Use**. This legislation establishes the criteria for a ‘qualified electronic transmission system’ for the purposes of receiving, marking, and returning a voting ballot. It also authorizes a municipality to conduct a municipal election through the use of such a system.

Under laws such as the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), voting systems - including those for municipal elections - must be accessible to voters with disabilities. Section 301(a) of HAVA requires that voting systems shall “be accessible for individuals with disabilities, including nonvisual accessibility for the blind and visually impaired, in a manner that provides the same opportunity for access and participation (including privacy and independence) as for other voters.” Title II of the ADA requires that individuals with disabilities have equal access to government information and services, including the voting process.

Additionally, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, in its Voluntary Voting System Guidelines, has set out standards for ensuring equal access to voting systems under Principle 5, “Equivalent and Consistent Voting Access.” In particular, Principle 5.1-D states, “Accessibility features must be integrated into the manufacturer’s voting system so accessibility for voters with disabilities is supported throughout the voting session, including any steps to activate the ballot at the voting station, ballot marking, verification, and casting.” A sample of the relevant section of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission’s guidelines are attached to this letter. We are happy to provide additional information about the accessibility requirements and specifications included in the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines.

One way to demonstrate Maryland’s commitment to ensuring accessible voting at all levels of government is by adding an eighth element to the definition of “qualified electronic voting transmission system” under proposed Local Government Article § 4701.1, such as “accessible to



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voters with physical or print disabilities.” While the accessibility obligations for these systems would exist regardless of whether they are explicitly codified under § 4701.1, including this element could serve as a clarifying reminder to municipalities of their legal and civic duties to ensure inclusion and access for voters with disabilities.

Thank you for reviewing this letter of information.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol A. Beatty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carol A. Beatty
Secretary, Department of Disabilities