

# **SB 901 Telephone Voting One-Pager.pdf**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV

## **How a Telephone Voting System Would Work**

1. A blind or otherwise print disabled voter would request to vote absentee using the telephone voting system in the same way voters request to use the electronically delivered ballot. In the request, the voter would certify they are blind or otherwise print disabled, similar to the method the State Board of Elections (SBE) used before opening up the electronically delivered ballot to all voters.
2. SBE would assess their voting eligibility like any other absentee voter request.
3. After verifying their eligibility to vote, SBE would send the voter credentials to access the telephone voting system and ensure the credentials are associated with the specific ballot assigned to the voter's area. This would operate in the same manner as it does for voters who receive an electronically delivered ballot.
4. The voter would call a toll-free number established by SBE, access an automated system, and enter their credentials using a touch-tone phone. Their specific ballot would then load into the automated touch-tone phone system.
5. The automated system would read each candidate in each contest, just like the ballot marking device (BMD). The voter would make their choices using their touchtone telephone. The system would review each selection so the voter can confirm its accuracy—just like the BMD and electronically delivered absentee ballot.
6. The system would require the voter to certify the ballot in a manner acceptable to SBE.
7. Once the voter submits the ballot through the automated phone system, the ballot is stored in a secure, air-gapped system disconnected from the internet.
8. SBE would print the ballot, ensuring auditability and a paper record.
9. SBE would duplicate the ballot into a scannable format, as it does for all other absentee ballots it receives, and place it into the canvass process.
10. SBE and local boards would canvas the duplicated ballots just like all other ballots.

**SB901\_BBrooks.pdf**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV

**BENJAMIN BROOKS**  
*Legislative District 10*  
Baltimore County

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Education, Energy, and the  
Environment Committee  
Energy Subcommittee

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Chair, Joint Electric Universal  
Service Program Workgroup



**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 901**  
**Election Law – Telephone Voting System - Requirements**  
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
February 25, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 901, Election Law – Telephone Voting System. This bill requires the Maryland State Board of Elections to select, certify, and acquire a telephone voting system to facilitate absentee voting for qualified voters who have a print disability, a condition that prevents a person from reading, holding, or processing standard printed materials in their original format.

The U.S. Election Commission found that 20% of voters with disabilities had trouble voting on election day due to accessibility, compared to 6% of voters without disabilities. Currently, an estimated 235,930 voters, or 3.8% of Maryland's population, have a disability which may affect their ability to fill out a paper ballot or return a ballot on election day.

People with print disabilities are often forced to give up ballot privacy and secrecy in order to vote. While Maryland's absentee voting process allows these voters to receive a ballot electronically and use their own technology to mark it, they must still print, sign, and return the ballot by mail or drop box. Many voters with print disabilities cannot complete these steps without assistance. As a result, they must rely on another person to print the ballot, locate the signature line, and prepare it for return, if such assistance is even available.

For those who do receive help, the consequences can be significant. Some voters do not want family members or friends to know how they voted, while others report being pressured to change their selections after their ballot is seen. Because the ballot is neither private nor independently cast, and because the assisting individual often has the last physical access to the ballot, voters cannot verify that their choices were submitted as intended. This creates an inequitable system in which voters with print disabilities must sacrifice privacy and independence to participate in democracy, something we do not require of any other group and should not require of voters with disabilities.

SB 901 addresses a critical accessibility gap in Maryland's election law by giving voters with print disabilities a secure way to vote independently and privately. While accessible options exist for in-person and mail-in voting, a telephone voting system offers a direct alternative for

eligible voters who cannot effectively use those formats. This targeted option ensures full participation in the democratic process without reliance on third-party assistance.

At the same time, evaluating new voting technology should include careful consideration of election integrity, voter confidence, and overall system security. SB 901 recognizes these concerns and includes important guardrails. Under the bill, the State Board of Elections would be responsible for placing eligible voters on a telephone voting system list, communicating system details in advance of elections, and conducting voter education so that the public understands how and when the system can be used. Further, it requires they integrate ballots cast through the system into existing absentee ballot canvassing procedures and guarantees that the system remains disconnected from the internet. These requirements ensure that accessibility is expanded in a controlled and responsible manner.

Importantly, SB 901 does not create open or universal telephone voting. Instead, it establishes a narrowly tailored accessibility option under the oversight of the State Board, consistent with existing absentee voting safeguards and standards. By pairing access with certification, testing, and oversight, the bill advances both inclusion and election security.

SB 901 reflects the principle that accessibility and election integrity are not competing goals. With appropriate safeguards in place, Maryland can expand access to the ballot while maintaining public trust in our election system.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a **favorable report** on SB 901.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks

# **Fogle Telephone voting SB0901 Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cheryl Fogle-Hatch

Position: FAV

Subject: Favorable SB0901 Telephone Voting System

From: Cheryl Fogle-Hatch  
1209 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21201  
c.k.fogle@gmail.com

To: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

I am here to ask for your support for SB0901. This is a bill that will establish a telephone system for disabled voters to return their absentee ballot. I believe that as a blind voter I should have the same options to vote as all other voters. I also deserve the same right to a secret ballot and to be able to vote independently just as other voters do.

I am an accessibility consultant for museums. I must travel to conferences and to different museums as part of my consulting business. That means that I am often on the road at election time. My job is very important to me, and I should not have to sacrifice my job in order to vote in person. It is important for me to be able to use an absentee ballot effectively and with all the benefits that any other voter has. Currently, I need assistance in printing the ballot to be sure it prints correctly and to be sure I am signing it in the correct place. That does not allow me the same opportunity to cast a secret ballot like other voters.

This legislation will provide me with the same opportunities to pursue my career and still be able to exercise my rights to participate fully and equally in the democratic process.

Please vote in favor of SB0901. Give us this opportunity to vote secretly and without any sighted assistance.

# **Testimony in support of SB0901 - Election Law - Te**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0901\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

02/25/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#0901- POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**Election Law - Telephone Voting System - Requirements**

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0901, **Election Law - Telephone Voting System – Requirements**

This bill is submitted to make voting easier for those individuals who have a disability that interferes with the exercise of their ability to vote.

The bill defines for those persons “accessible format” meaning braille, large print, audio, or digital text that is used by blind or visually impaired individuals or individuals with a print disability. It defines “print disability” meaning a condition that prevents or inhibits an individual from reading, holding, or processing standard printed materials in the original format.

The solution to these identified barriers to certain voters will be, notwithstanding any other provision of law, the state board, in consultation with the local boards, shall select and certify a telephone voting system for absentee voting by eligible voters who have attested to having a print disability that meets the requirements of this bill.

This bill will require the State Board of Elections to select, certify, and acquire a telephone voting system for absentee voting by certain voters who have attested to having a print disability that meets certain requirements; defining "print disability" as a condition that prevents or inhibits an individual from reading, holding, or processing, standard printed materials in the original format; providing for the eligibility of a voter to use the telephone voting system; etc.

Every person who can cast a legal ballot should be given every opportunity to do so in Maryland.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0901.**

# **Favorable SB0901 telephone voting.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV



*Live the life you want.*

From: Ronza Othman, President  
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland  
15 Charles Plaza, #3002  
Baltimore, MD 21201 [president@nfbmd.org](mailto:president@nfbmd.org)

To: Senate Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee to give a favorable report to SB0901 – Election Law – Telephone Voting System - Requirements.

The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland is Maryland's oldest and largest civil rights organization of and for blind, low vision, and deaf-blind members. We represent voters from throughout Maryland.

Voting is a fundamental right. Equal access to voting methods is essential to maintaining a fair and inclusive democracy. Yet our current voting procedures unfairly disadvantage voters who are blind, low vision, print disabled, have hand dexterity limitations, or who cannot return a paper ballot privately and independently.

According to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 20% of voters with disabilities reported difficulty voting on Election Day due to accessibility barriers, compared to just 6% of voters without disabilities. In Maryland, an estimated 235,930 voters — approximately 3.8% of our population — have a disability that may affect their ability to fill out or return a paper ballot.

For voters with print disabilities, the problem is particularly acute in the absentee process. Maryland allows voters to receive a ballot electronically. A blind voter can access that ballot using screen-reading

technology, complete it independently, and make their selections privately. But then the voter must print the ballot, sign it, and return it by mail or drop box.

Many voters with print disabilities cannot print, sign, and return a ballot without assistance. They must rely on another person to print the ballot, locate the signature line, prepare the envelope, and submit it. Some voters do not have anyone available to assist them. Others do not want family members or friends to know how they voted. Some have shared that the individuals assisting them attempt to influence their vote after seeing their selections. And because the assisting individual is often the last person with eyes and hands on the ballot, the voter cannot independently verify that their choices are the ones actually submitted.

This forces blind and print-disabled voters to surrender privacy and ballot secrecy simply to participate in democracy. We do not require any other demographic group to give up privacy and independence in order to vote. We should not require it of voters with disabilities.

Some have suggested that voters with disabilities can simply vote in person if they want privacy and independence. But many voters with disabilities need to vote absentee because of their disabilities. Others are traveling, in school, working, or have caregiving obligations — just like other Marylanders. We have a legal and moral obligation to make every voting method available in Maryland accessible to all voters. Suggesting that voters with disabilities should use a different method, rather than ensuring equal access to the method they choose, echoes discriminatory policies from our nation's past.

Blind and print-disabled voters have been advocating for accessible absentee ballot return in Maryland for nearly a decade. Thirty-three states and territories provide paperless ballot return for military and overseas voters. Thirteen states provide paperless ballot return for voters with disabilities. Maryland is not one of them. Attached to this testimony, you will find a list of the states and territories referenced here.

The primary argument against solving this problem has centered on security concerns. Each year, advocates return with solutions that balance accessibility and security. This year's bill presents a novel, secure solution that does not transmit voted ballots over the internet. There is no internet-based ballot return in this proposal. As a result, this method avoids many of the election integrity concerns that have been raised about online voting. In fact, it is more secure than the current absentee process for blind voters, which relies on third-party assistance.

This bill establishes an automated touch-tone telephone voting system for absentee voters who are blind or otherwise print disabled.

**National Federation of the Blind of Maryland**

**Ronza Othman, *President NFBMD*** | 15 Charles Plaza, #3002, Baltimore, MD 21201 | 443-426-4110 | [www.nfbmd.org](http://www.nfbmd.org)

Here is how it would work:

- A voter would request to vote absentee using the telephone system in the same manner they currently request an electronically delivered ballot. They would certify that they are blind or print disabled.
- The State Board of Elections would verify eligibility just as it does for any absentee voter. After verification, the voter would receive credentials associated with their specific ballot.
- The voter would call a toll-free number, enter those credentials on a touch-tone phone, and their ballot would load into an automated system. The system would read each contest and each candidate aloud — similar to how a ballot marking device works in person. The voter would make selections using their keypad. The system would review each selection so the voter can confirm accuracy. The voter would then certify the ballot in a manner determined by the State Board.
- Once submitted, the ballot would be stored in a secure, air-gapped system not connected to the internet. The State Board would print the ballot, ensuring a paper record and auditability. The ballot would then be duplicated to a scannable ballot and canvassed exactly like every other absentee ballot in Maryland.

The only meaningful difference is that the State Board prints the ballot instead of the voter — eliminating the need for third-party assistance and restoring privacy and independence.

This concept is modeled on systems used in Australia and New Zealand for blind voters, but adapted to Maryland's larger ballots. Unlike those countries, which rely on human operators, Maryland would use an automated system, making it scalable, secure, and resource-efficient.

While no state currently uses an automated telephone system for absentee voting, telephone voting has been used in other contexts. The federal Securities and Exchange Commission has permitted corporations with large shareholder populations to use touch-tone telephone voting for shareholder decisions. In addition, several government entities have established entirely telephone-based processes, such as the Social Security Administration and Internal Revenue Service; these methods demonstrate that confidential and sensitive information can be transmitted securely and accessibly through such a system.

In addition, several states, including Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Vermont used telephone voting between 2004 and 2016 in response to the accessibility requirements of the Help America Vote Act. However, these systems were used only for in-person voting and were later replaced by accessible ballot marking devices.

**National Federation of the Blind of Maryland**

**Ronza Othman, *President NFBMD*** | 15 Charles Plaza, #3002, Baltimore, MD 21201 | 443-426-4110 | [www.nfbmd.org](http://www.nfbmd.org)

This bill also includes important safeguards. It requires review and certification where applicable, includes reporting requirements to the General Assembly, and incorporates sponsor amendments that:

- Set implementation by the 2030 primary;
- Require coordination between DOIT and SBE;
- Include disability law protections consistent with the ADA;
- Provide alternative certification pathways if traditional testing labs are not applicable;
- Clarify that the system serves the public interest; and
- Ensure the Board cannot reject certification simply because the method is available only to voters with disabilities.

We cannot continue asking blind and print-disabled voters to wait while we search for a perfect technological solution. We would not ask any other community to surrender privacy and independence while we deliberate. To do so would be discriminatory.

Telephone voting is a common-sense, accessible, secure, and low-tech solution that restores privacy, independence, and dignity to Maryland voters with disabilities — while preserving the integrity of our elections.

For these reasons, on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland, I respectfully ask for a favorable report on SB0901. For questions, please contact me at [President@nfbmd.org](mailto:President@nfbmd.org) or at 443-426-4110.

**National Federation of the Blind of Maryland**

**Ronza Othman, *President NFBMD*** | 15 Charles Plaza, #3002, Baltimore, MD 21201 | 443-426-4110 | [www.nfbmd.org](http://www.nfbmd.org)

# **SB0901 HB1027 Chart - paperless ballot return.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV

U.S. State	Paperless	Paperless	Notes					
Alabama	X							
Alaska	X							
Arizona	X							
Arkansas								
California	X		Currently being sued by voters with disabilities for access					
Colorado	X	X						
Delaware	X	X						
District of	X							
Florida	X							
Hawaii	X	X						
Indiana	X	X						
Iowa	X							
Kansas	X							
Louisiana	X	X						
Maine	X	X						
Massachus	X	X						
Missouri	X							
Montana	X							
Nebraska	X							
Nevada	X	X						
New Jersey	X							
New Mexico	X							
North Caro	X	X						
North Dak	X	X						
Oklahoma	X							
Oregon	X							
Rhode Isla	X	X						
South Caro	X							
Texas	X		Currently being sued by voters with disabilities for access					
Utah	X	X						
Virgin Islar	X							
Washingto	X							
West Virgi	X	X						
Total		33	13					

# **Yasmin SB0901 Telephone voting system test.pdf**

Uploaded by: Yasmin Reyazuddin

Position: FAV

Subject: Favorable SB0901 Telephone Voting System

From: Yasmin Reyazuddin  
1617 Lewis Avenue, Rockville Md, 20851  
[Yasmin81065@gmail.com](mailto:Yasmin81065@gmail.com)

To: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

I came from India to this country in 1990 and became a citizen of the US in 1996. I have never missed an opportunity to vote since I became eligible in 1996. I am a resident of Rockville and district 17. I have lived at my current location since 2011.

Every time the elections came around, my father would drive me to the polling place, and I was able to use the BMD to cast my vote. My father passed away in December. Now I have no means to get to the polling place. I do not have reliable transportation. The buses only run for three hours in the morning and three hours in the evening, with no time during the middle of the day. Taxis will not take me half a mile to the nearby school as they want a long-distance fare. Metro access, the paratransit system for Montgomery County and surrounding areas, would require me to wait to return home for at least two hours. Voting doesn't take nearly as long and would therefore leave me in the polling place until the vehicle comes back for me. It's unreasonable for both me and the polling place to wait for that length of time while I am in the way while voting takes place.

This legislation will give me another tool in my toolbox. A telephone voting system is the best opportunity for me to participate in the democratic process and be able to cast my vote.

Please vote in favor of SB0901. Give us this opportunity to vote secretly and without any sighted assistance.

**DRM Written Testimony FWA SB 901 Tel. Voting BS.pd**

Uploaded by: Braden Stinar

Position: FWA



**Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change**

The Protection and Advocacy System for the State of Maryland

1500 Union Ave., Suite 2000, Baltimore, MD 21211

Phone: 410-727-6352 | Fax: 410-727-6389

[DisabilityRightsMD.org](http://DisabilityRightsMD.org)

**SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Senate Bill 901: Election Law- Telephone Voting System-**  
**Requirements**  
**February 25, 2026**  
**Position: Support (With Sponsor Amendments)**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the State's Protection and Advocacy agency, federally mandated to advance and protect 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 respectfully submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 901, as strengthened by the sponsor amendments.

Federal law, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), requires that voters with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in the voting process, including the opportunity to vote privately and independently. Despite these protections, significant barriers persist. Many voting methods continue to rely on printed materials or in-person assistance, limiting meaningful access and undermining ballot secrecy for some voters with disabilities.

Many voters with print disabilities—including individuals who are blind or who have low vision—are unable to independently read or mark a standard paper ballot. As a result, these voters must rely on assistance from poll workers, family members, or aides to complete their ballot. This reliance can compromise ballot secrecy and undermines the fundamental right to vote privately and independently.

Senate Bill 901 establishes a telephonic absentee voting system for voters who have print disabilities. This system would allow eligible voters to communicate and confirm their ballot selections in a private and secure manner.

Telephonic voting has the potential to meaningfully address the barriers previously mentioned. When implemented with strong security and accessibility safeguards, telephonic voting can provide voters with disabilities the opportunity to cast their ballots independently, privately, and securely. This bill does not propose a method that will replace existing voting options; rather, it expands access to work to ensure that no voter is excluded by a system that does not meet their needs.

DRM supports Senate Bill 901 with the sponsor amendments which are also supported by the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland. These

amendments strengthen the bill by reinforcing implementation timelines, establishing security and testing safeguards, and grounding the certification process in the State's disability access obligations while preserving the bill's core accessibility purpose.

Specifically, the sponsor amendments:

- Require that the telephone voting system be fully operational and available for use by eligible voters no later than the 2030 primary election:
- Direct the State Board of Elections to coordinate with the Department of Information Technology to assess the feasibility of developing the system internally, evaluate cost, security, timeline, and procurement considerations, and determine whether development is a viable compared to acquisition from a third-party vendor.
- Clarify that the system must protect the rights of voters and candidates in a manner consistent with federal and state disability rights laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Require independent security and performance testing consistent with applicable federal or state standards for voting systems, or if no such standards exist for telephone voting systems, standards developed in consultations with the Department of Information Technology.
- Replace the general "public interest" certification standard with a requirement that certification be consistent with the State's obligations to provide accessible voting under federal and state law.
- Provide that the State Board of Elections may not decline to certify a telephone voting system solely because it is available to voters with a print disability as a reasonable accommodation.

Although Senate Bill 901 represents an important step toward expanding voting access in Maryland, it must not be viewed as a substitute for accessible polling places that allow all voters to cast a ballot privately and independently. Maryland should continue to 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 901 with the sponsor amendments.**

Contact: Braden Stinar, BradenS@DisabilityRightsMD.org or 410-929-6859.



**2-25 SB 901 Telephone Voting System.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nikki Tyree

Position: UNF



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**SB 901 Election Law - Telephone Voting System - Requirements**

**Position – Opposed**

**BY: Linda T. Kohn, President**

**Date: February 25, 2026**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland follows the SARAT model for elections, believing they should be secure, accurate, recountable, accessible, and transparent. While the League can appreciate the nature of SB 901, we believe the bill would introduce unnecessary risk to voters at large.

SB 901 proposes allowing Marylanders with print disabilities to use a phone to cast their ballots during elections. This would mean that at several points, voting would have to happen either via the internet or on a public network. According to multiple sources, there is currently no way to securely cast a secret, risk-free ballot via the internet or a public network. Verified Voting, a nonpartisan election integrity group, claims that internet-transmitted voting is not only not a credible method but also opens the door to bad actors seeking to hack our election system.<sup>1</sup> This is a risk that Maryland voters should not have to assume at this time without significant guardrails.

Furthermore, SB 901 attempts to soft-launch phone voting by stating that “air-gap” computers will be used and that any technology must be vetted. It’s important to note that while it would be possible to eventually store voter data on an air-gap computer, it would be impossible to have an automated phone-voting system that was not, at some point, connected to a public network in order to receive information from outside. Beyond that, SB 901 also sought to circumvent the need to vet a secure phone system, stating that public interest alone is sufficient to trigger its use. That would lead Maryland voters to rely on and trust a system that has not been properly studied for security.

Typically, public interest should be enough to encourage openness to new and innovative ideas. However, in the case of phone voting, several documented cases demonstrate that it is not ready for use. The Department of Homeland Security, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Elections Assistance Commission, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and the FBI have all reached the same conclusion. Voting over the internet,

<sup>1</sup> <https://verifiedvoting.org/internet-voting-faq/>



Even via a phone system, it opens the door to unnecessary and well-recognized risks. In addition to security risks, election workers must verify that the vote is from a qualified voter and not from someone who has borrowed the voter's phone.

In some testimony, you will hear or read that this vote-by-phone system was implemented in states like West Virginia, municipalities like Denver, or countries like New Zealand. Some of these stories can be misleading. In West Virginia, the system was first implemented in 2018 with fewer than 20 people using it. When it was used again, it was less than 150 people, all of whom were serving overseas. Denver did institute a vote-by-phone for one election, but has since done away with the program. In New Zealand, the system was only designed to handle a "yes" or "no" ballot question - not a full ballot with candidates.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland applauds any effort to make elections more accessible. Which is why we have been on the front lines of passing legislation such as the Help America Vote Act, Motor Voter, and Vote-by-Mail initiatives. Unfortunately, SB 901 fails any security or voter safety metric. In a time when voters are hearing disinformation about election integrity, we should not introduce new risks.

For the above reasons, LWVMD must ask for an unfavorable report on SB 901.

**MD.SB 901 .testimony.written.pdf**

Uploaded by: Susan Greenhalgh

Position: UNF

**Testimony of Susan Greenhalgh  
Senior Advisor on Election Security  
Free Speech For People  
Submitted to the  
Maryland Senate  
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
Contact: susan@freespeechforpeople.org**

**Re: SB 901-UNFAVORABLE**

**February 23, 2026**

Thank you Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to offer testimony on SB 901

I serve as the senior advisor on election security for Free Speech For People, a national, non-profit non-partisan legal advocacy organization dedicated to defending our democracy and our Constitution. I have studied electronic ballot return for twenty years and have authored several reports on it, with partners including the American Association for the Advancement of Science<sup>1</sup> and the Association of Computing Machinists.<sup>2</sup> Free Speech For People is committed to preserving and enhancing access to the ballot for all voters, and to protecting the security and integrity of all ballots cast to ensure our elections represent the will of the voters. We support the intention of SB 901 to make voting easier for voters with print disabilities, but we cannot support this approach because it introduces online voting.

SB 901 purports to permit “telephone voting.” To be clear, all telephones today are connected to, and transmit data via, the internet, which means that any “telephone voting” system would include the same security risks as an internet voting system. Further, the language in SB 901 could be interpreted to apply to a mobile phone application.

It is well-researched, settled science that returning voted ballot information electronically over the internet is dangerously and unacceptably insecure. This has

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<sup>1</sup> Greenhalgh, S., Newell, S., “Leveraging Electronic Ballot Return Safely and Securely During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, (Jun 2020). <https://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Leveraging%20Electronic%20Balloting%20Options%20Safely%20and%20Securely%20During%20the%20COVID-19%20Pandemic.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Greenhalgh, S., et al, “Email and Internet Voting: The Overlooked Threat to Election Security,” *ACM U.S. Technology Policy Committee*, (Oct. 18, 2018). <https://www.acm.org/binaries/content/assets/public-policy/jtreportemailinternetvoting.pdf>

been established by the Department of Homeland Security, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the FBI, and U.S. Election Assistance Commission, as well as the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, and countless public and private studies. *Furthermore, the Maryland Department of Legislative Services has already conducted extensive and exhaustive research into this matter and presented its findings to the Committee, concluding that electronic return was unacceptably insecure. **The Department of Legislative Services also concluded that Maryland was unlikely to face successful litigation to force online ballot return under the Americans with Disabilities Act.***

**Existing security controls do not mitigate the security risks inherent with mobile voting.**

The security controls included in SB 901, such as printing paper ballots after transmission, “air-gapping” the tabulation device, and requiring encryption, do not eliminate the high risk of electronic ballot return. These are provisions that vendors and proponents of online voting promote to obfuscate the insoluble security risks inherent with electronic ballot return.

We expand on these security risks of electronic ballot return in detail in our testimony on SB 727 and welcome the opportunity to provide additional information and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Greenhalgh

Senior Advisor on Election Security

Free Speech For People.

# **SB 901\_HB 1027\_ Election Law - Telephone Voting**

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

**SB 901/HB 1027:** Election Law - Telephone Voting System - Requirements: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Government, Labor & Elections Committee:

I am writing to respectfully **oppose SB 901/HB 1027**, concerning *Election Law – Telephone Voting System – Requirements*.

While ensuring access to voting for all Marylanders is important, this bill would require the State Board of Elections to select, certify, and acquire a telephone voting system specifically for absentee voting by voters who attest to having a print disability.

There are serious concerns about the **cost, security, and administrative complexity** associated with implementing a new telephone voting system. Mandating a separate system for a specific group of voters may divert limited election funds and staff resources from other essential election administration tasks, such as improving existing absentee and early voting systems, training poll workers, and enhancing cybersecurity protections.

In addition, any voting system involving telephones or remote access raises **security and verification challenges**. Ensuring voter identity, ballot integrity, and resistance to fraud or technical vulnerabilities is difficult with telephone systems, and creating a new system may introduce risks not present in current paper-based or verified digital alternatives. Proper safeguards may be expensive or impractical to implement.

Finally, any expansion of voting methods should be carefully evaluated for potential unintended consequences, including inconsistencies across election jurisdictions and unequal access. Strengthening existing methods that already comply with federal accessibility requirements may be a more efficient way to support voters with disabilities without the cost and uncertainty of creating a separate mandate.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **oppose SB 901/HB 1027**.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals

# **SB 901\_HB 1027\_ Election Law - Telephone Voting**

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

**SB 901/HB 1027:** Election Law - Telephone Voting System - Requirements: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Government, Labor & Elections Committee & Education, Energy & the Environment Committee:

I am writing to respectfully **oppose SB 901/HB 1027**, concerning *Election Law – Telephone Voting System – Requirements*.

While ensuring access to voting for all Marylanders is important, this bill would require the State Board of Elections to select, certify, and acquire a telephone voting system specifically for absentee voting by voters who attest to having a print disability.

There are serious concerns about the **cost, security, and administrative complexity** associated with implementing a new telephone voting system. Mandating a separate system for a specific group of voters may divert limited election funds and staff resources from other essential election administration tasks, such as improving existing absentee and early voting systems, training poll workers, and enhancing cybersecurity protections.

In addition, any voting system involving telephones or remote access raises **security and verification challenges**. Ensuring voter identity, ballot integrity, and resistance to fraud or technical vulnerabilities is difficult with telephone systems, and creating a new system may introduce risks not present in current paper-based or verified digital alternatives. Proper safeguards may be expensive or impractical to implement.

Finally, any expansion of voting methods should be carefully evaluated for potential unintended consequences, including inconsistencies across election jurisdictions and unequal access. Strengthening existing methods that already comply with federal accessibility requirements may be a more efficient way to support voters with disabilities without the cost and uncertainty of creating a separate mandate.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **oppose SB 901/HB 1027**.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals