

SB 727/HB 1066: Municipal Elections - Qualified Electronic Transmission Systems - Authorization for Use: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

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

I am writing to express my strong **opposition** to **SB 727/HB 1066**, "Municipal Elections - Qualified Electronic Transmission Systems - Authorization for Use."

While the bill includes some security features in its definition of a "qualified electronic transmission system," **authorizing municipalities to conduct entire local elections electronically—allowing voters to receive, mark, and return ballots via an online platform—introduces unacceptable risks to election integrity, security, and public trust.**

Key concerns include:

- **Vulnerability to cyber threats:** Even with encryption, multi-factor authentication, air-gapping, and auditability requirements, no electronic system is immune to hacking, malware, phishing, insider threats, or sophisticated state/nation-state attacks. A breach in a municipal election could alter results, disenfranchise voters, or erode confidence in all elections.
- **Lack of a universal, verifiable paper trail for all voters:** While the bill mentions a process for printing decrypted ballots to create a paper record, it does not guarantee that every electronic vote produces an auditable voter-verified paper ballot before transmission, **as recommended by election security experts.** Without mandatory hand-marked paper ballots or robust post-election audits, recounts become unreliable or impossible.
- **Disproportionate impact on smaller municipalities:** Many Maryland towns and cities lack the resources, expertise, or funding to implement, test, secure, and audit complex electronic voting systems effectively. This could lead to inconsistent standards, unequal access, or failures in smaller jurisdictions.
- **Potential for coercion, privacy erosion, or accessibility issues:** Electronic transmission raises risks of voter coercion (e.g., in shared households), device compromise, or exclusion of voters without reliable internet/technology. While the bill prohibits misuse of voter data, it does not fully address broader privacy or equity concerns in remote electronic voting.
- **Unnecessary expansion:** Maryland already has absentee/mail-in and in-person options for municipal elections. **Introducing internet-based voting for entire elections is misguided, especially given ongoing national concerns about**

electronic voting vulnerabilities and the absence of widespread, proven secure systems at the municipal level.

Municipal elections are foundational to local democracy and deserve the highest standards of security and verifiability. **Hand-marked paper ballots, counted publicly with oversight, remain the gold standard for preventing fraud and enabling trustworthy audits.** Allowing electronic transmission systems at this stage could invite problems rather than solve them.

I urge the Committee to **give SB 727/HB 1066 an unfavorable report** and prevent its passage. Preserving secure, transparent, and verifiable election processes is essential for maintaining public confidence in our democracy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals