



TESTIMONY

SB0697 – Election Law – Actions to Influence an Election Social Media Platform Algorithms and Bots Purchased by Foreign Nationals

Bill Sponsor: Senator Brian Feldman

Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, Co-Chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in support of **SB0697** on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists—individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

SB0697 addresses a growing threat to election integrity: the use of social media algorithms, automated accounts, and digital tools purchased by foreign nationals to influence Maryland elections. These tactics can spread misinformation and manipulate public opinion. Maryland must ensure its laws keep pace with evolving digital strategies used to interfere with our democratic institutions.

This bill strengthens protections by prohibiting foreign nationals from using bots or algorithmic tools to influence state or local elections. It also establishes clearer enforcement mechanisms, including a rebuttable presumption regarding social media platform expenditures, to ensure violations are addressed.

SB0697 supports the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition because a core part of our mission is to inform voters about legislation and their legislators. We are committed to preventing any forces—foreign or domestic—from distorting the information Marylanders rely on to make informed choices.

Therefore, we respectfully urge a **FAVORABLE** report on SB0697.