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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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HOUSE BILL 1066
MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS—QUALIFIED ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION
SYSTEMS—AUTHORIZATION FOR USE

FAVORABLE

MADAM CHAIR, MR. VICE CHAIR, AND ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT, LABOR, AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE, I RESPECTFULLY REQUEST YOUR SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 1066, ENABLING LEGISLATION THAT AIMS TO ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY AND INCREASE VOTER TURNOUT BY PERMITTING MUNICIPALITIES TO USE MOBILE VOTING SYSTEMS IN CITY ELECTIONS.

IF ENACTED, HB1066 WOULD AUTHORIZE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS TO CONDUCT ELECTIONS USING A QUALIFIED ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION SYSTEM. IMPORTANTLY, THIS BILL ENSURES THAT MUNICIPALITIES PARTICIPATING IN MOBILE VOTING SYSTEMS MAY ONLY USE THE VOTER DATA THEY COLLECT FOR ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND VOTER PARTICIPATION STATISTICS, SAFEGUARDING VOTER PRIVACY.

A “QUALIFIED TRANSMISSION VOTING SYSTEM” IS DEFINED AS AN ELECTRONIC SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS **QUALIFIED** VOTERS TO RECEIVE, COMPLETE, AND SUBMIT THEIR BALLOTS, ALL WHILE ENSURING ROBUST DATA SECURITY MEASURES ARE IN PLACE.

THE SYSTEM WILL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING SECURITY FEATURES TO PROTECT VOTER INTEGRITY:

- SECURITY AUDITABILITY
- END-TO-END ENCRYPTION
- END-TO-END VERIFIABILITY

- MULTIFACTOR AUTHENTICATION
- AIR-GAPPING TO PREVENT UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS TO DATA
- A PROCESS FOR PRINTING DECRYPTED BALLOTS TO CREATE A PAPER RECORD
- BIOMETRIC OR EQUIVALENT DIGITAL IDENTITY VERIFICATION TECHNOLOGIES

SEVERAL JURISDICTIONS ACROSS MULTIPLE STATES HAVE SUCCESSFULLY PILOTED MOBILE VOTING SYSTEMS. RESULTS FROM THESE INITIATIVES INDICATE THAT MOBILE VOTING NOT ONLY INCREASES ACCESSIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES BUT ALSO SIGNIFICANTLY BOOSTS VOTER TURNOUT WHILE REDUCING ELECTION COSTS.

FOR INSTANCE, A 2019 PILOT PROGRAM IN DENVER, COLORADO, RESULTED IN A DOUBLING OF TURNOUT FOR VOTERS COVERED UNDER THE UNIFORMED AND OVERSEAS CITIZENS ABSENTEE VOTING ACT (UOCAVA). ALTHOUGH THIS INITIATIVE WAS CONDUCTED ON A SMALLER SCALE, IT ENABLED RESIDENTS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL TO FULFILL THEIR CIVIC DUTY. SIMILARLY, A 2020 LOCAL ELECTION IN THE SEATTLE AREA UTILIZED A MOBILE VOTING SYSTEM THAT NEARLY DOUBLED TURNOUT.

IMPLEMENTING MEASURES THAT ENCOURAGE VOTER ACCESSIBILITY PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN INCREASING TURNOUT. WHEN BARRIERS TO VOTING ARE REDUCED, PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS TENDS TO RISE SIGNIFICANTLY. SEVERAL VOTER IMPACT STUDIES SHOW THAT WHEN VOTERS CAN EASILY ACCESS THE BALLOT, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. THIS NOT ONLY REFLECTS A HEALTHIER DEMOCRACY BUT ALSO ENSURES THAT A WIDER RANGE OF VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES IS REPRESENTED. SUPPORTING THIS BILL WILL CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE INCLUSIVE ELECTORAL SYSTEM, ULTIMATELY BENEFITING SOCIETY.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT HB1066 WOULD NOT REPLACE ANY EXISTING VOTING METHODS BUT WOULD SERVE AS AN ADDITIONAL OPTION FOR VOTERS. FEEDBACK FROM INDIVIDUALS WHO PARTICIPATED IN PILOT PROGRAMS REVEALS A CLEAR PREFERENCE FOR MOBILE VOTING DUE TO ITS CONVENIENCE AND ACCESSIBILITY.

MUNICIPALITIES WILL RETAIN THE FLEXIBILITY TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN DIGITAL IDENTITY VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THEIR EXISTING VOTING PROCEDURES AND ALLOW THEM TO MEET THE BILL'S

SECURITY STANDARDS USING METHODS THAT ALIGN WITH THEIR LEGAL, TECHNICAL, BUDGETARY, AND OPERATIONAL REALITIES.

SPONSOR AMENDMENT: ON PAGE TWO, LINES 6-7, I AM CHANGING THE TERM “SHALL” TO “MAY” SO MUNICIPALITIES HAVE THE FLEXIBILITY TO USE BIOMETRIC OR OTHER DIGITAL IDENTITY TOOLS SUCH AS FACIAL RECOGNITION OR FINGERPRINTING WHERE APPROPRIATE TO MEET THE BILL’S SECURITY STANDARDS THAT COMPLEMENT THEIR LEGAL, TECHNICAL AND BUDGET CONSTRAINTS.

IN CLOSING, I URGE YOU TO CONSIDER THE POTENTIAL OF HB1066 TO EMPOWER VOTERS, ENHANCE PARTICIPATION, AND MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF OUR ELECTIONS.

BY PASSING THIS BILL, WE CAN PAVE THE WAY FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE VOTING EXPERIENCE FOR ALL CITIZENS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION. I REQUEST A FAVORABLE REPORT.