

Written Testimony in Support of HB 145

TO: Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections

FROM: Jennifer Hicks

DATE: 2.2.2026

RE: SUPPORT for HB 145 – Election Law - Election Misinformation, Election Disinformation, and Deepfakes

Hello,

I am writing to express strong support for HB145. As someone whose profession involves wading through mis/disinformation campaigns for global security-related issues, this is a subject that invokes deep-seated frustration whenever I see a wilful unwillingness from lawmakers to properly address it. In an era where digital technology can be used to manipulate reality and spread confusion, this bill should provide essential tools to safeguard our democratic process and ensure that Marylanders have access to accurate information.

I am not anti-AI by any means but I will be the first to concur that generative AI and sophisticated deepfakes present a direct threat to election integrity. By establishing clear definitions for election misinformation, disinformation, and deepfakes, HB145 creates a necessary legal framework to address these challenges.

I support HB145 for the following reasons:

- Empowers truthful communication: requires the State Administrator to actively disseminate accurate information to correct credible reports of election mis/disinformation.
- Provides enforcement mechanisms: authorizes the State Board of Elections to seek injunctions for the removal of false information from online platforms and issue subpoenas for related records.
- Ensures accountability: allows the State Board to file civil actions for damages against entities that publish disinformation, ensuring they are held financially responsible for the costs of correcting the record.
- Combats malicious deepfakes: prohibits the use of deepfakes intended to influence a voter's decision or misrepresent facts about the electoral process, with clear penalties for violations.
- Balances free speech: includes exemptions for satire, parody, and bona fide news reporting, so that legitimate expression is protected.

Voters must be able to trust that information surrounding their election processes is accurate. I want this bill to empower the State of Maryland to swiftly respond to attempts to deceive the public and provide strong deterrents against those who would use digital technologies to undermine our elections.

I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on HB145.

Sincerely,
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