



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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February 4, 2026

The Honorable Melissa Wells, Chair
Government, Labor and Elections Committee
141 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of House Bill 145**: Election Law - Election Misinformation, Election Disinformation, and Deepfakes

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee:

The integrity of our elections is fundamental to public trust in government and to the health of our democracy. As technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace, so do the threats posed by the misuse of artificial intelligence and digitally manipulated media. I want to thank Delegate Feldmark for introducing House Bill 145 (HB145) which takes a thoughtful and timely approach to addressing the growing risks of election misinformation, disinformation, and the use of deepfakes.

HB145 establishes clear and narrowly tailored prohibitions against the knowing or reckless dissemination of deepfakes intended to materially mislead voters, misrepresent election processes, or interfere with ballot-related activities. We believe that this bill will have a positive impact on election integrity and ensuring accurate information for vulnerable communities, including our older adults who are often targets for scams.

By focusing on intent and providing appropriate exceptions for satire, parody, journalism, and good-faith broadcasters, the bill strikes an important balance between protecting free expression and safeguarding the electoral process from deliberate deception. Equally important, the bill equips the State Administrator of Elections and the State Board of Elections with tools to respond quickly and effectively when election misinformation or disinformation arises. The ability to correct false information, seek removal of deceptive content from online platforms, and recover costs associated with those corrective efforts will help ensure that voters receive accurate and reliable information in Howard County and all counties across the state.

Howard County has a strong interest in the orderly administration of elections and in maintaining public confidence in the outcomes. Local election officials and community partners are often on the front lines of voter engagement, and clear state-level standards and enforcement mechanisms are essential to supporting that work. Preventing the spread of materially false election information ultimately benefits voters at every level of government.



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We recognize that Maryland has already taken important steps in recent years to address election interference and misinformation. HB145 build on that foundation in a prudent and forward-looking way, reflecting the realities of emerging technologies while preserving constitutional protections.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **favorable report on House Bill 145.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Calvin Ball', is written over a faint, light blue horizontal line.

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive