



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

April 1, 2022

Maryland House of Delegates
Delegate Luke Clippinger
Room 101
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB956/HB1409

Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Katherine Berry. I am the Election Director in Carroll County and serve as the chair of the Legislative Committee representing the Maryland Association of Election Officials. I am writing in support with amendments of SB956/HB1409 – Criminal Law – Threats to Public Officials. I am urgently asking you to consider amending SB956 to include **permanently employed election officials who are employed by the Maryland State Board of Elections and Local Boards of Elections.**

Just during the current election cycle, election officials across Maryland have experienced significantly increased levels of harassment and threatening messages that voters are returning in the mail-in ballot envelopes sent as a result of the new requirement for all voters to get a mail-in ballot application. An uptick of angry phone calls from voters and harassment on social media is also causing an increase for concern.

One of the more notable instances of concern occurred in Carroll County a few weeks ago involving two separate incidents of empty pre-paid postage envelopes that were sent with the mail-in ballot applications being returned to the office with no return address and filled with suspicious substances that required a call to the local police department for investigation.

In Maryland and across the country, election officials are resigning from their positions because of the undue stress of people making threats to election officials and their family members. States such as California have even begun considering making election officials confidential voters. Nationwide, there have been studies conducted to highlight the harassment and threats that election officials are enduring.

Maryland's election officials are asking you for this amendment because the profile of this job has continued to take center stage and we feel it urgent to have some protections in the law if any of the above issues were to be more severe. Just as elections are part of the Department of Homeland Security's "Critical Infrastructure," we hope the committee will consider the livelihoods of the election officials and ask this committee to favor this amendment to SB956.

If you have any questions, please contact me at Katherine.berry@maryland.gov or (410)386-2958.

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