



SBE Policy 2021-01: Extension of Temporary Electronic Petition Signature Acceptance

Adopted: January 12, 2021
Annapolis, Maryland

WHEREAS, on March 5, 2020, the Governor issued a proclamation declaring a State of Emergency in an effort to control and prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the State, and has renewed that proclamation at regular intervals;

WHEREAS, during this State of Emergency, the Governor and local authorities have imposed restrictions on certain business operations and public gatherings of persons as a result of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, the State Board of Elections recognizes that the current, extreme conditions inhibit the collection of signatures required for a petition to gain access to or place a question on the ballot;

WHEREAS, on April 22, 2020, the State Board of Elections, pursuant to its authority under Md. Code, Comm. Law § 21-117(a), authorized the use of electronic signatures to facilitate signature-gathering during this state of emergency;

WHEREAS, on June 12, 2020, the State Board of Elections, pursuant to its authority under Md. Code, Comm. Law § 21-117(a), authorized the extended use of electronic signatures to facilitate signature-gathering during this state of emergency;

WHEREAS, petition efforts for the formation of new political parties, for the nomination of unaffiliated candidates, and relating to a question arising under Article XI-A, Article XI-F, or Article XVI of the Maryland Constitution, or §9-205 of the Local Government Article may begin in collecting signatures for placement of a candidate or ballot question on the November 8, 2022 gubernatorial general election ballot;

WHEREAS, in light of the restraints imposed by State and county officials, the State Board of Elections believes that an extension of the acceptance of the electronic signature for filing a petition is appropriate;

WHEREAS, the State Board of Elections believes that allowing the submission of petitions bearing electronic signatures during this period will further the State's goals of minimizing the threat posed by COVID-19 while preserving the Constitutional rights of Marylanders to petition for access to or to place a candidate or question on the ballot;

THEREFORE, the State Board of Elections states as follows:

1. Findings.
 - a. The State Board of Elections finds that extension of the acceptance of electronic signatures for a petition will not endanger the public health, welfare, or safety.
 - b. To the contrary, the extension of the temporary acceptance of electronic signatures for petition promotes the public health, welfare, or safety by providing sponsors to collect signature with limited or no in-person interactions.

2. Policy.

- a. The policy and requirements stated in SBE 2020-01 on April 22, 2020 remain the same.

3. Applicability.

- a. This policy shall be in effect from January 13, 2021 until May 27, 2021 for submitting any petition with an electronic signature to place the name of an individual or question on the November 8, 2022 gubernatorial general election ballot, or to create a new political party in time for that party to qualify to nominate candidates to appear on the ballot at the November 8, 2022 gubernatorial general election.