

I am Poorvi Vora, a tenured Professor of Computer Science at The George Washington University.

I have published extensively on the subject of voting system security and very enthusiastically support this Bill.

The Mueller indictments described a Russian company carrying out all the activities necessary to perpetrate online absentee ballot fraud at significant scale in Maryland. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security has confirmed that Maryland's online ballot delivery system was one of those targeted by Russian operatives in 2016. In this context, it is negligent for the State Board of Elections to continue its current policy of offering online ballot delivery to ALL voters.

Accurate personal information is easily found in the dark market. Using personal information on voters, it is easy to impersonate them and request online ballot delivery to fraudulent email accounts. The ballots can then be printed, completed and mailed.

These requests and completed ballots would appear legitimate to the State because they would use authentic credentials. Those who say they will detect or track such requests, but need to keep their detection techniques secret, are, like those who developed the app used in the Iowa Caucus, voicing a misplaced overconfidence.

Bad actors could target regular voters, in which case many voters would show up on Election Day to find an absentee ballot had been requested on their behalf and they would have to vote provisionally, creating a lot of confusion and distrust.

Many other attacks are possible, including undetectable attempts to change the election outcome. There is no technical means available to prevent such attacks. This Bill makes an important change that limits the impact of a potential attack. , It thus reduces the incentive to bad actors to go through the effort of carrying out the attack at all. It allows for exceptions, permitting voters to receive an online ballot in unusual circumstances.

This change disenfranchises no voters. It benefits all, because all would suffer were such an attack to occur.

I have testified twice, in 2018 and 19, in favor of similar bills that did not pass in the Maryland Legislature. Iowa was also discouraged from using the internet by many computer scientists. The situation in Maryland is baffling and highly concerning. With all of the recent examples of active efforts to interfere in elections, it is crazy for Maryland to fail to pass this Bill. If this Bill does not pass, and Maryland elections are disrupted, it could be on a considerably larger scale than in Iowa this year. How will the Assembly justify ignoring both: the repeated public warnings from expert computer scientists as well as the knowledge that Russians probed Maryland's online ballot delivery system in 2016?