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Honorable Members of the State Government Committee:

Please permit us to comment on Senate Bill 1249. We are very interested in the potential establishment of an Election Law Advisory Board, and we are eager to see it come to fruition with as full a complement of expertise as possible.

I speak on behalf of the officers of the volunteer organization VoteAllegheny, which has been researching, advising about, and advocating for secure, recountable, accessible voting systems for nearly 14 years.

While we are supportive of this bill and the Board it would create, we have a few items we feel should and could be addressed.

Regarding the composition of the Board, as detailed in § (b), paragraph (6), having only one representative from each Congressional district *while also having those be the representatives with specialized knowledge and experience* severely limits the pool of expertise. While equal distribution of representation is important, those who are knowledgeable in disabilities matters and those who are familiar with voting rights issues and those who have other expertise in such systems are more likely to be concentrated around the major cities or university areas, and thus you have limited your expertise by limiting the board to one individual representative from each Congressional district.

Why limit all aspects of the Board by geography? Why not seek the best representatives in all categories *in addition* to someone from all parts of the Commonwealth?

Toward that goal of including those with specific knowledge and ability, **there should be a paragraph (iv) under paragraph (b)(6), providing for individuals with computer science expertise, those with advanced understanding of information security, and those with intensive knowledge of voting systems.** The lack of this particular specialization is an especially troublesome omission, and could doom our Commonwealth to further vulnerability. We do have such individuals in our Commonwealth, I have been privileged to work with them on an ongoing basis about this very matter and two of them are officers in our organization and parties to this letter. One such individual, Ron Bandes, served on the Advisory Committee on Voting Technology of the Joint State Government Commission. **This is an absolutely critical point**, without which the board might flounder in a lack of information. And there is diversity within this category: someone versed in Information Security

may not be the same person as someone versed in User Interface, etc. **All such subsets should be represented.**

Where the Bill mentions, in (b)(6)(ii), “**groups advocating for voting rights,**” the description is too broad: it would include those who advocate for everyone to register to vote, those who advocate against gerrymandering, those who advocate for distribution of candidate information, those who seek the extremes of all-internet voting (with whom we strongly disagree) or 100%-hand-counted ballots, those who seek to register members of certain groups (seniors, high-school seniors, various races, genders, etc.), and also those of us who advocate decent voting systems. If only one person from each Congressional district can be chosen, *and* we must limit by party affiliation, *and* we are to have representation from the various interests, we are further limiting the Board’s ability to produce a fulsome product. **Please consider including at least one individual from each subset of “voting rights advocates.”**

Additionally, where the Bill mentions, in (b)(6)(i), “**groups advocating for individuals with disabilities,**” there are many such groups; perhaps it should be limited to those which have dealt in voting matters. Further, there are many subsets of this category as well, and all should be represented. There are those who advocate for the mobility-challenged, there are those who deal with vision impairment and those for hearing impairment. There are groups of volunteers who go through a process on Election Day which I am certain they would like to see improved – they go to hospitals to make certain that suddenly hospitalized patients do not lose their ability to vote by virtue of their situation. (They must travel from each hospital to the County seat and back to the hospital and back to the County seat with documentation for each ballot, often tracking down the patient again in the hospital, in order to help those patients vote.) **All such subsets should be represented.**

**In all those cases, there should be representation from each subset of each area presented in paragraph (6) including adding a paragraph (iv), and none of them should come at the expense of any other subset or group to be represented.**

We should not, for example, have THE representative of blind voters come from Congressional District X and thus block out THE representative of computer security who also lives in District X, and also preclude THE representative from the League of Women Voters or Verified Voting. We cannot have too much input from experts and highly qualified individuals; we cannot rule them ineligible simply because someone else lives in the same district and is also highly qualified in something else.

We do understand why the Board comprises many political office holders or their representatives, as one of the goals is to review the Pennsylvania Statutes and make recommendations. But legislation cannot be made in a vacuum, and they should be backed by a specific and broader assurance that those who know enough about the issues at hand have ample and certain input into the final product.

There are many of us across the Commonwealth who for years have been doing exactly what the legislation discusses as the duties of the board: we have studied the Election Code, we know many items that should be modified; we have worked with many other agencies across the state on these issues; we have been scrutinizing new election technology, and making recommendations. We would be disappointed to see potential input from these many groups, especially from VoteAllegheny’s perspective, fall by the way in favor of our colleagues in the disabilities community or those who advocate for other voting rights. All should be represented, we would like to see everyone at the table.

We hope you can make the legislation reflect the importance of these details toward the breadth of input from those with expertise and knowledge to the overall outcome of the way Pennsylvanians cast our ballots.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment, and for this hearing and your work on Senate Bill 1249.

Sincerely,

Audrey N. Glickman  
Secretary / Treasurer  
VoteAllegheny