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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **State Administrator of Elections addresses recent statements regarding the role of the US Department of Homeland Security and elections**

**Annapolis, MD (February 18, 2026)** — Recent high profile press statements have suggested the possibility of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) running elections in an attempt to cast doubts on election security and integrity by the States. Before any misinformation or disinformation takes hold from these statements, the State Administrator of Elections Jared DeMarinis issued the following statement to provide corrective information.

*The law is clear: in the event of a state of emergency that interferes with the electoral process, the Governor of Maryland has the authority, not FEMA, to mandate any changes. FEMA cannot close polling places, alter the election date or change how or the manner we vote. Furthermore, if an emergency circumstance occurs but not a state of emergency, the State Board may petition the circuit court to take remedial actions in the public interest and to protect the integrity of the electoral process. Again, the authority rests with the State, not FEMA. The President, DHS or FEMA has no constitutional or statutory authority to take over Maryland's elections and electoral processes during a state of emergency or emergency circumstances.*

*Once again, Maryland's voter registration process and integrity have been called into question especially with regard to citizenship. As State Administrator of Elections, I want to reassure all Marylanders that the Maryland State Board of Elections (SBE) and our local election officials are unwavering in their commitment to maintaining an accurate, secure, and trustworthy voter registration list, fully compliant with both federal and State laws.*

*As State Administrator, I am legally charged with maintaining the accuracy and currency of the statewide voter registration list. This is a responsibility I do not take lightly. It is a privilege and honor to safeguard the right to vote. Public trust in the electoral process is paramount. It is the bedrock of our democracy and the foundation for any elected government.*

*Voter registration list maintenance is not a static process. It is a daily effort with continuous updates and changes. In respect to citizenship updates, Maryland law sets forth two specific instances where SBE can act on information about potential noncitizens. The Administrative Office of the Court (AOC) sends SBE information about potential jurors who indicated they did not qualify for jury service because they were not a U.S. citizen, and SBE also accepts self-reporting directly from individuals. Before any individual is removed from the statewide voter registration list based on an AOC report, SBE verifies the information by sending a **written notification** to the individual requesting confirmation of their citizenship status.*

*If information is received from a third party source regarding citizenship status of a registered voter, that information cannot be confirmed by SBE. Since SBE cannot take any administrative action to remove or cancel the individual based upon these third party reports, SBE forwards that information to the Office of the State Prosecutor (OSP) for further investigation.*

*Maryland's detailed and legally circumscribed process for removing a voter from the registration list is designed to be absolutely certain and remove any doubt in the cancellation. Without the necessary verification steps required by State law, election officials cannot cancel a voter registration record.*

*This office will not disenfranchise a voter based upon partial or unsubstantiated evidence. The right to vote is a sacred right that has been expanded through the sacrifices of many before us. Maryland does not want to erect artificial barriers in registering to vote or voting, nor does it want you to re-register to vote due to an improper or illegal cancellation. Remember voting is not an entitlement nor benefit program created or established by the government, but a constitutional right embedded in the principles of our nation's foundation, our Constitution and the Maryland Declaration of Rights.*

*Regarding the issue of SAVE (Systemic Alien Verification for Entitlements) and the possibility of mandating its use for verification of citizenship in the voter registration process, Maryland does not use the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) SAVE database in the voter registration or list maintenance processes. SAVE isn't designed and purposed for voter registration nor to assist in maintaining voter roll accuracy. Additionally, Maryland law does not provide SAVE as a permissible means for list maintenance. Furthermore, the SAVE database has been reported to produce erroneous information about registered voters' citizenship. Using SAVE could disenfranchise qualified voters. This is contrary to the intent of Maryland law that ensures the maximum number of eligible individuals can register rather than disenfranchising eligible individuals with unnecessary burdens to exercising their constitutional right to vote.*

*The State Administrator and SBE staff oversee our cybersecurity defensive efforts against bad actors, not the federal government or CISA (Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency). Our security team is an integral part of our daily operations and public facing voter services ensuring the highest levels of awareness and preparedness. Periodic updates on our security posture are presented to the bipartisan State Board members. Moreover, SBE works closely and collaboratively with our State partners as well as other states for sharing alerts on possible cyberthreats. This collaboration does not impair nor undermine our independence and nonpartisan mission.*

*Finally, every eligible Marylander is the right person to vote. Their voice will determine who will govern our State. Elections from all the votes cast decide the right leaders for Maryland's future. And every vote cast is counted. As our Declaration of Rights states so distinctly and clearly: "the right of the People to participate in the Legislature is the best security of liberty and the foundation of all free Government; . . . and every citizen having the qualifications prescribed by the Constitution, ought to have the right of suffrage."*

*As I stated before, Marylanders should feel confident in our election administration. Always verify the information you hear or see whether on social media, from a friend, or any other source with the trusted source of electoral information, the Maryland State Board of Elections. SBE ensures Marylanders can exercise their constitutional right in a verified, open, transparent and empowering manner that is safe and secure.*

For more information visit [www.elections.maryland.gov](http://www.elections.maryland.gov) .

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