



**State of Vermont
Office of the Secretary of State**

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**Sarah Copeland Hanzas, Secretary of State
S. Lauren Hibbert, Deputy Secretary**

**Elections Division
Seán Sheehan, Director**

February 6, 2025

**To: Hon. Brian Collamore, Chair
Senate Committee on Government Operations**

**From: S. Lauren Hibbert, Deputy Secretary of State
Sean Sheehan, Director, Elections and Campaign Finance**

Re: S. 23 An act relating to the use of synthetic media in elections

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S. 23.

The Secretary of State's Office supports the passage of S.23. We support this disclosure, not a prohibition, of the use of synthetic media. This covers media, within 90 days of an election, that has been manipulated to appear realistic using digital technology – including AI – to deceive voters, influence the outcome of an election, or injure the reputation of a candidate. The bill requires a mandatory disclosure in the campaign material if synthetic media is used. The disclosure states: "this media has been created or intentionally manipulated by digital technology or artificial intelligence." This bill is based on other states' legislation across the nation. This has not been a partisan measure.

The bill creates a pathway for affected candidates to seek injunctive or other equitable relief. Any violation would incur fines based on the severity of intent or impact of the media. If the election media is intended to incite violence the fines are higher. The Office supports this escalation.

The Secretary of State's Office believes that there is value for candidates to use AI. Specifically, it could allow candidates with fewer resources to be more efficient and effective in their outreach efforts. Also, the use of AI can streamline processes that would otherwise be more labor-intensive. We also know there is room for abuse or ambiguity about the source of election material. A classic and recent example is the deepfake robocall in New Hampshire impersonating Joe Biden before the presidential primary which encouraged voters to stay home.

It is important that Vermonters have trust in elections, this is why voters must have notice when election materials use AI. It promotes transparency during an election cycle.