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University of Pittsburgh
Institute for Cyber Law,
Policy, and Security

2516 Cathedral of Learning
4500 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

March 1, 2019

The Honorable Brad Raffensperger
Secretary of State
214 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Secretary Raffensperger,

It has come to my attention that The Blue Ribbon Commission on Pennsylvania's Election Security's work has been cited in Georgia as supportive of the exclusive use of ballot-marking devices for in-person voting.

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Pennsylvania's Election Security supports the use of ballot-marking devices for accessibility purposes. The commission does not believe that the use of ballot-marking devices for every in-person vote is best practice in most contexts given the threats posed by nation-state actors and the importance of ensuring that paper ballots reflect voter intent.

While states and counties' specific election administration needs vary widely, the commission's work has led us to believe that the best practice for election security, and often for election administration purposes, is hand-marked paper ballots, counted by an optical scanner, coupled with mandatory risk-limiting audits. In addition to being more secure, using primarily hand-marked paper ballots with optical scan systems is also likely to be less expensive than relying on ballot-marking devices.

Ballot-marking devices must be available in polling places as an accessible voting option for voters who are unable to hand mark paper ballots, thus providing these voters with a means to vote privately and independently. Even in this context, ballot-marking devices should preferably entail the use of human-readable paper ballots, not those with bar codes or QR codes.

I wish the State of Georgia the best of luck in selecting its voting systems. As we in Pennsylvania also know, it is a difficult and often contentious process. Please do not hesitate to reach out if the commission's work can be a resource to you.

Regards,

David Hickton
Founding Director of Pitt Cyber
Co-Chair, The Blue Ribbon Commission on Pennsylvania's Election Security