Opening Remarks: Assemblywoman Lesley Cohen, Representive for District 29

Voting is both a right and a responsibility**,** and I believe that every eligible voter should have the ability to participate in elections and make their opinions and choices known. This includes every person with a disability. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 26.8 percent of adults in Nevada have some type of disability. This demographic comprises a wide variety of voters, including persons with cognitive, communicative, mobility, physical, or visual impairments. Federal and state laws affirm the right to an accessible, independent, and private vote for people with disabilities. This bill extends upon those rights and codifies a method for a person with a disability to participate in this civic process. Primarily, the measure allows a person with a disability to use the Effective Absentee System for Elections (EASE) to register and vote. The program was established to allow uniformed military and overseas Nevadans to register, request a ballot, and vote entirely online using a digital/electronic signature.

Bill Summary

The measure before you includes lots of conforming language, but the bill itself is quite simple. In section 1, Assembly Bill 121 requires the secretary of state to allow EASE to be used by:

- An elector with a disability to register to vote; and
- A registered voter with a disability to apply for and cast an absent ballot.

The measure requires the system of approved electronic transmission to allow such an elector or registered voter to provide his or her digital or electronic signature on any document or other material that is necessary for the elector to register to vote or for the registered voter to apply for and cast an absent ballot.
Finally, for this section the secretary of state is required to establish procedures to be used by local elections officials in accepting, handling, and counting absent ballots received from a registered voter with a disability using EASE. Now, one thing to keep in mind is that the Secretary of State's Office has a program to allow disabled Nevadans to vote. So they know it works and works well. This bill is essentially putting the program into statute so that we know the rights of disabled Nevadans will be protected.
Sections 2-12 are conforming language.
Sections 13-16 relate to deadlines for voters with a disability and voters under UOCAVA which is the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), Pub. L. 99-410, 100 Stat. 924 (1986). By existing statute, a UOCAVA "Covered voter" is a uniformed-service voter; an overseas voter; or a spouse or dependent of a uniformed-service voter.
Also pursuant to statute, the Secretary of State shall make available to covered voters information regarding voter registration procedures for covered voters and procedures for casting military-overseas ballots. Additionally, the Secretary of State shall establish a system of approved electronic transmission through which covered voters, a method by which a covered voter may provide his or her digital signature or electronic signature on any document or other material that is necessary for the covered voter to register to vote, apply for a military-overseas ballot or cast a military-overseas ballot.

Currently, the UOCAVA application to register to vote and a ballot are timely if received by the seventh day before the election. With regard to voter registration, if received after the seventh day before the election, it is treated as an application to register for subsequent elections.

To make sure all voters have the same access, I propose that EASE and the UOCAVA provisions in Nevada law be revised to align with the same-day voter registration deadline provided to other voters in

Nevada. In addition, EASE and the UOCAVA provisions related to deadlines for the receipt of a ballot should be conformed to allow for ballots to be received before close of business on the day of the election.

Here with us today is Mark Wlaschin (Vuh-La-shin), Deputy Secretary of State for Elections of the Office of the Secretary of State. Mr. Wlaschin is available to answer technical questions you may have about EASE, implementation of the bill, and the proposed amendment. Mr. Wlaschin will take us through a demonstration of the EASE. Additionally, Mr. Wlaschin is here to express the Secretary of State's support of the bill. After that we will have testimony from two co-presenters, Santa Perez, President Emeritus of People First Nevada, member of the Nevada Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, and Member of the Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities (ACICIEID) (although she is not representing them.) Further, Dora Uchel ((y with out the y)ou el) Martinez, representing the Nevada Disability Peer Action Coalition, will testify. Dora is an advocate and was the lead presenter in the 2019 session on AB 140 which prohibited discrimination against certain persons in certain proceedings relating to children. Jeanine Mooers

Closing Remarks

After hearing from our constituents who use the EASE and the agency who ensures the safety of our elections, I would urge your support, and I certainly make myself available to answer any questions you may have.