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Chairman Woodrow, Vice Chair Ortiz, Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Adam Ernest, and I am the Co-Founder and CEO of Follow My Vote, a Colorado-based technology startup. At Follow My Vote, we are developing a secure, end-to-end verifiable, open-source blockchain-based remote voting solution.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss Colorado House Bill 1170, a bill for an act concerning the use of distributed ledger technology in elections.

For the last two years, I have served on the Government Blockchain Association's Blockchain Voting Working Group. Our working group is currently defining universal standards that blockchain/distributed ledger voting systems must meet when involved in various aspects of conducting an election, such as voter identification and verification, ballot delivery, marking, return, and storage, and vote tabulation and reporting.

Our working group includes leaders in the distributed ledger election space, including: Susan Eustice, the inventor of the electronic voting machine; Utah County Commissioner (and former County Clerk) Amelia Powers Gardner; and Philip Andreae, a technology consultant with Voatz - one of the most widely-used blockchain-based mobile voting apps in federal, state and local elections today.

One of our group's first initiatives was to produce a preliminary report for the Elections Assistance Commission, which included recommendations for modernizing the latest version of their Voluntary Voting System Guidelines. Now we are in the process of drafting standards that state and local election officials can use to determine what capabilities blockchain/distributed ledger voting systems need to have before they can be used in elections within their jurisdictions. These standards will help to ensure secure and accurate elections, while offering flexibility for election system companies to design and build systems that they believe will best meet or exceed those requirements using their own approach.

The biggest problem that our working group runs into is similar to the problems that we find in this bill, in that rather than standards for companies to build to, this bill offers prescriptive tactics that could potentially limit creativity and diversity in the design of solutions, ultimately jeopardizing the security and integrity of elections and the confidentiality of voters.

For example, this bill consists of various protocols (e.g., Part 2: Election Integrity Protocol) on how distributed ledger voting systems should function when used to perform various actions in an election. Yet, in an effort to ensure the best outcome with respect to election modernization efforts for the state and people of Colorado, I highly recommended that legislation is limited to governing what actions need to be performed in an election and what types of technology can be used to perform those actions and allow vendors the freedom to innovate in order to figure out how the type of technology being used will perform the desired actions.

I applaud the idea behind HB 1170. Election systems built on blockchain or distributed ledger can be more secure, more accurate, easier to administer and less costly to state and local governments, and can provide a better experience for voters in this state.

Follow My Vote and our fellow working group members would welcome the opportunity to work with the sponsors, members of this committee, and state and local election officials to craft a bill that defines the standards for blockchain/distributed ledger voting solutions that will be used in this state. Those standards will level the playing field for voting companies to compete in the state, ensure that election officials only select from verified secure systems, and provide transparency and the best user experience for the voters of Colorado.

If you have any questions, please contact me via email: adam@followmyvote.com.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Adam Ernest