

CLARENCE K. LAM, M.D., M.P.H.
Legislative District 12
Baltimore and Howard Counties



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 420
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3653 · 301-858-3653
800-492-7122 Ext. 3653
Clarence.Lam@senate.state.md.us

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Committee

Executive Nominations Committee

Joint Committee on Ending Homelessness

Chair

Joint Committee on Fair Practices and
State Personnel Oversight

Chair

Howard County Senate Delegation

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Support SB647: ELECTION LAW - INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION - VOTER
REGISTRATION AND VOTING BY STUDENTS
(STUDENT VOTER EMPOWERMENT ACT OF 2020)**

Background:

- According to the Campus Vote Project, Millennials and Gen Z will be the largest share of eligible voters in 2020. These groups have not been the largest share of the electorate in past elections because of their lower voting rates.
- Although young adults (ages 18-29) made up about 21% of the voting eligible population in 2014, their voter turnout reached record lows in recent years.

The Issue:

- College students tend to be geographically mobile, lower-income citizens, young voters and voters of color, partly by virtue of their age. These characteristics are representative of many students at our universities.
- According to Washington Monthly magazine, only 3 out of the Best 80 Colleges for Student Voting, were in Maryland. Considering that there are over 50 higher education institutions in Maryland (according to the Maryland Higher Education Commission) it is clear that our state can do better.

What SB647 does:

- Requires public institutions of higher education to dedicate a staff member to be a student voting coordinator. This coordinator will:
 - Craft and implement a student voting plan
 - Create and disseminate information about voter registration & voting opportunities
 - Establish a website with information about and links to the State registration process, deadlines, early voting process, polling places, transportation options, etc.
 - Create and implement a plan to increase student voter student registration that includes a policy allowing excused absence for voting
- Encourages early polling placement on campus if possible
- Establish a separate precinct on the campus of a public or private institution of higher education that awards baccalaureate degrees, enrolls 4,500 or more students, and provides on-campus housing to students
- Requires annual reports regarding student voting

Why is SB647 needed?

- Passage of this bill will help to ensure that more students at colleges and universities throughout the state are better informed about the electoral process and can more easily participate in a core democratic process.

Additional information:

- Key facts about youth voting:
 - From 1972 to 2016, the proportion of youth ages 18 to 24 who reported voting in presidential elections decreased from 50 to 39 percent.
 - In 2018, young people ages 18-24
 - 45.7% reported to be registered to vote, and
 - 30.1% reported voted
 - In 2018, across the US for all ages:
 - 61.3% reported to be registered to vote, and
 - 49.0% reported voted
 - The percentage of youth who reported voting in 2014, a nonpresidential election year, was 16 percent—markedly lower than in the 2016 presidential election (39 percent). This pattern has been consistent since 1972.
 - In 2016, young women reported registering to vote and voting (53 and 42 percent, respectively) at higher rates than their male peers (49 and 37 percent, respectively).