

CCMD_Tierra Bradford_Fav_SB0666

Uploaded by: Bradford, Tierra

Position: FAV

February 20, 2020

**Testimony on SB 666
Election Law-Time off for Employee Voting
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 666 which would improve upon the requirement that employers allow employees two hours off of work to vote in elections. What differentiates this bill from prior efforts requiring employers to allow employees time off to vote is the accommodation for early voting and same day registration voting reforms.

It is important that employees get time off to vote when their work schedule does not naturally allow for time for employees to make it to the polls. Inflexible work schedule is a common barrier to voting. Thankfully, in Maryland, we require employers allow time off for their employees to vote. However, current law allows for two hours off only on election day and only if the employee claims to be registered to vote. The current law does not allow employees to take advantage of two of Maryland's most important and equitable voting reforms.

Early voting is supposed to allow for more flexibility to vote in elections, and yet, people who have to work can only take advantage of time off on election day. Similarly, Same Day Registration allows voters who are not yet registered a chance to participate in our elections by allowing them to register up until the actual election is over. However, people who have to work will not be able to take advantage of this opportunity if they have to be registered beforehand to get time off.

This bill makes common sense updates so more eligible Marylanders can register, vote and have their voices heard. Voting should be accessible for all eligible voters, even if they have some restrictions due to their work schedule. Voting is a fundamental right. We must ensure that our elections are free and fair— while also working to make voting more accessible so every eligible Marylander can make their voice heard.

We urge a favorable report on SB 666.

SB666_FAV_Lee

Uploaded by: Senator Lee, Senator Lee

Position: FAV

SUSAN C. LEE
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MAJORITY WHIP

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology,
and Biotechnology

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 20, 2020

Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

Senate Bill 666 - Election Law -Time Off For Employee Voting

This Senate Bill, whose number shall not be named, is an update of an important law that allows the working poor to participate in our democratic process. While we don't have a collective day off of work for Election Day, we do have an under-utilized provision in the Election Law Article under Section 10-315 that requires employers to pay employees for up to 2 hours absence from work to vote if they are a registered voter and vote in Maryland on Election Day. As we have moved to same day registration in combination with early voting, this statute has not been updated accordingly. We find that this updated provision will not only make it easier for employees to vote, but also allow employers more flexibility for when they can allow their employees to cast their ballot for general elections.

My office has been in contact with officials from the State Board of Elections, and they expressed support of the view that this legislation was simply an update of this section of code.

Workers in Maryland who cast votes in other states should also have time off, and perhaps two hours is just enough time to do so in many areas of the state that border other states. We would hope there is reciprocity in other states, but we should be the first to offer this incentive to vote, even if not in Maryland. Moreover, Election Day every other year is not the only important election, as many of you know, most elections are decided at the primary level, especially for Congressional seats. Finally, local elections likely wouldn't require much time off of work, as lines don't tend to be long, but if someone works far from where they live, it might be otherwise impossible to participate in local elections. We should encourage participation in all elections.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable vote on this Senate Bill.

LWVMD_Nancy Soreng_FAV_SB666

Uploaded by: Soreng, Nancy

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

SB 666 Election Law – Time Off for Employee Voting

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents

Date: February 20, 2020

The League of Women Voters believes that voting is a fundamental right that must be protected for all citizens. A healthy democracy depends on informed and active citizen participation. Maryland has made great strides in removing legal and practical barriers to voter participation.

Maryland law currently requires that employers provide time off for Maryland residents to vote if they do not have two hours off-duty while the polls are open. There is not a similar protection, however, for residents of other states who work in Maryland. Particularly in the metropolitan Washington area, many workers may have insufficient time to reach their polling place outside normal working hours. This bill would protect those citizens' right to vote by requiring employers to allow time off on election day. Under current law, an employee who requests time off for voting may be required to present proof of voting on a form prescribed by the Maryland State Board of Elections, which would not be applicable in other states. The bill would add flexibility to this requirement by specifying that the employee shall furnish "reasonable proof" of voting or attempting to vote.

We urge a favorable report on SB 666.