

January 29, 2020

**Testimony on HB 137
Montgomery County - Elections - Early Voting Centers MC 19-20
Ways and Means**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 137 which would increase the number of early voting locations in Montgomery County. We believe voting should be accessible for all voters and this legislation aims to do just that by ensuring Montgomery County voters who live in the White Oak area have easy access to early voting.

More recently, the issue of establishing an additional early voting site has been a point of contention in Montgomery County. An additional early voting site was requested for the White Oak area for several reasons such as: 1) the area being known for having long wait times for voting, 2) it being difficult for many of the citizens of white oak to get to the closest early voting site because a substantial amount of people in this area do not have cars. They rely on public transit that takes 41 minutes to get to the site and doesn't run on weekends 3) the barriers mentioned have a disparate impact on the elderly, disabled folks, people of color, and the immigrant community in white oak 4) the area being densely populated.

Citizens requested an additional site in the White Oak area but were denied by the Montgomery County Board of Elections. We believe the Montgomery County Board of Elections recent decision to not add an additional early voting site was wrong, especially considering all the previous issues mentioned and the additional support the request got on the state level from Montgomery County legislators.

Additionally, because the State Board of Elections decided not to rule on this issue, we believe legislation requiring the addition of an early voting site is a great solution.

All voters of Montgomery County should have easy access to an early voting site and adding an additional site is an important step forward. The proposed legislation would expand participation in our democracy, and for that reason we support HB 137 and urge a favorable report on this emergency measure.