

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington and members of the Committee,

My name is Daniel Koroma. I am a longtime resident of White Oak. White Oak is an amazing neighborhood and many of us contribute immensely to the economy of the state of Maryland. Many of my neighbors are nurses or work in the healthcare industry. Many of my neighbors may have taken care of some of you or your families in a hospital or a doctor's office. This is one of my neighbor's work schedules: She get up between 4:00 - 5:00a.m, pray, and get her daughter ready for school. She drops off her daughter at the next door neighbor's apartment before dashing out of the apartment and walking 5 minutes to catch the 6:00a.m bus at the White Oak shopping center. Her first shift starts at 7:00a.m and ends at 3:00p.m. Her second job starts at 4:00p.m, which is a 30 minutes bus ride, and ends at 11:00p.m. This is her life from Monday through Friday.

We are not lazy. We have been going to the Silver Spring Civic Building (1 hour bus ride on the weekends) and Marilyn Praisner in Burtonsville (No access to public transportation on the weekends) because we know that voting is our right and responsibility as Americans. We know what it took for people who look like us to get the rights to vote. According to the Montgomery County Board of Elections, in the eight years we have had early voting in Maryland, participation in Montgomery County has grown from 8.4 percent of the total votes cast in the general election to 27.8 percent in 2018. This proves that the early voting law was a good law for citizens like us in White Oak.

Nevertheless, many of the polling places with the longest wait times for Montgomery County voters on November 2018 were in the White Oak area, along the U.S. 29 and New Hampshire Avenue corridors. Councilmember Hucker and members of the Montgomery County Board of Elections witnessed the unacceptable long lines at the Praisner center in Burtonsville. The Washington Post reported that some voters waited well over an hour, some up to two hours, to vote at the Marilyn J. Praisner Community Recreation Center in Burtonsville. Some people left before voting, including seniors and disabled individuals who could not stand in line that long, as well as parents and caregivers.

We work hard and contribute everyday to make Maryland a great state and all we are asking for you to do is to make it easy for us to vote. Having an early voting site at the White Oak Recreation Center, which is in a highly populated neighborhood, would be convenient for us than the Burtonsville or Silver Spring early voting sites. It will also reduce the long lines at nearby polling places on Election Day.

Your vote today is to make voting easy for me and my neighbors. I hope that is not too much to ask of you. I urge you to add the White Oak Community Recreation Center as a 12th early voting site in Montgomery County.