

February 11, 2020

Testimony on HB 487**Election Law-Early Voting Centers-Accessibility by Public Transportation****Ways and Means****Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland is in support of HB 487 which would require that early voting centers must be located one quarter mile from a public transportation station or stop.

Early voting was established to drive participation and make voting more convenient. While the program has been a success and has seen a surge in the number of Marylanders voting early, we are leaving those with tight work schedules and family obligations behind. This legislation would provide individuals easy access to early voting sites, eliminating the barrier of transportation for many voters.

Pew Research Center found that out of the registered voters who did not vote in 2016, 14% cited being busy or conflicting schedule, 12% were ill or disabled, 8% were out of town or away from home, 3% had transportation problems, and 2% cited inconvenient hours or polling places.

During the 2018 gubernatorial general election, more people voted than ever before with early voting more than doubling compared to turnout in 2014. Even with the higher than usual turnout, Maryland could do better with voter turnout for all elections. Making sure Early voting sites are place near public transportation stations or stops will build on the success of the program, helping to improve participation throughout the state.

We need to do everything we can to remove barriers to exercising the right to vote. HB 237 would help to do that by ensuring all voters are provided with better access to early voting sites

We urge a favorable report.