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HB1314: Election Law - Voting Systems - Accessibility for Voters With Disabilities
March 3, 2020, 1 p.m. in the Ways and Means Committee

Position: Support

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and we support HB1314.

People with disabilities expect to be treated equally at the polling booths and a uniform ballot system, that is also available to the general public, would support this expectation.

They should not be physically separated at the polls from other voters, and in the position of having to use a personally identifiable ballot such as what is available now through the current alternative “accessible” ballot. We should not have a system that causes the segregation of ballots cast by people with disabilities due to unequal ballot appearance thereby jeopardizing the privacy of a person’s vote. This was the reason language prohibiting a segregated ballot was included in Maryland Election Law Article §9-102(f)(1), Annotated Code of Maryland.” People with disabilities should have access to a ballot that may not be set apart or distinguishable, in size and form, from a ballot cast by a voter without a disability.

The Arc Maryland encourages people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, to be informed about candidates; to be active in the democratic process and vote. We understand the importance of their votes in private voting system. This bill proposes the use of a uniform ballot, accessible to all.

In summary, we believe this is a GOOD BILL that would improve access to voting for people with disabilities.

Respectfully submitted,

Ande Kolp
Executive Director