



TESTIMONY FOR HB0156 STUDENT AND MILITARY VOTER EMPOWERMENT

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Luedtke

Committee: Ways and Means

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0050 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Maryland has done a very good job of making voting accessible and easy for the majority of the residents of the state. It's more of a fraught process if you are a student or a member of the military. The rules are not obviously posted and there is so much confusion about where to vote, and sometimes there is not a polling place close by. Many students don't even know that they should be voting, particularly in primaries.

This bill would make it much easier for these groups to participate by, ensuring that the local Board of Elections ensures that there are polling places nearby institutions of higher learning or military installations. It also requires that the local Board of Elections post instructions for students and military on their website and explains how to register and how to use a post-card registration and application for a ballot by military personnel.

It even goes a step further, which we believe is a crucial step, in setting up a Student Voter Coordinator in institutions of higher learning to promote participation and coordinate with the local Board of Elections. There are other, more specific provisions of the bill that allow for reporting of how successful the outreach at the schools is, and options to make the outreach even more effective.

Our members are very much in support of expanding the number of voters in the state as well as access to the vote. There is nothing more important than getting students to feel empowered to vote and to participate in Democracy and nothing more supportive of our military than making it easier for them raise their voices.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

