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**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
**Testimony on:** SB 605 Election Law – Automatic Voter Registration - Alterations  
**Position:** Favorable  
**Hearing Date:** February 21, 2024

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on SB 605. The bill will make voter registration transactions more automatic and seamless. When an agency like the Motor Vehicle Administration already has evidence of an individual’s eligibility to vote or change of address, the agency will just send the information electronically to the State Board of Elections instead of taking extra time to ask the individual whether they want to register or update their registration. The voter will then receive a confirmation notice in the mail.

The Sierra Club and its members advocate on behalf of both the natural and human environments, including promoting racial and social equity. As a grassroots organization, we believe that voting should be as accessible and convenient as possible for all individuals who are eligible to vote. By making the voter registration process truly automatic, this bill will save time for both individual registrants and agency personnel.

Several government agencies in Maryland offer individuals who interact with them an opportunity to register to vote or to update their voter registration. The agencies are the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA), Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE), local departments of social services, and the Mobility Certification Office (MCO) in the Maryland Transit Administration.

Since it began implementing RealID, the MVA has definitive evidence that many of the individuals it interacts with are citizens who live in Maryland and are old enough to register to vote. Since the agency already has this information, there should be no need for further conversation or paperwork before registering that individual to vote.

Ten states have adopted this method of automatic voter registration. Studies in Colorado<sup>1</sup> and Oregon show that this method of automatic voter registration has resulted in increases in voter registration and voting. The bill will result in more complete and accurate voter registration lists and will save time and cost for both individuals and state agencies.

For those reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 605.

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<sup>1</sup> Justin Grimmer and Jonathan Rodden, “Changing the Default: The Impact of Motor-Voter Reform in Colorado”, Stanford University Dept. of Political Science, 2022 ([full report](#)) ([summary](#))