



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**SB 495 Election Law - Petitions and Ballot Questions - Plain Language
Requirement**

POSITION: Support with amendment

BY: Linda Kohn, President

Date: February 21, 2024

The League of Women Voters was founded to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government. When ballot measures are presented in language that is overly technical, it becomes a barrier to voter participation. This bill seeks to ensure that petitions as well as ballot measures will be readily understood by the average voter.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports the intent of SB 495, which proposes a plain language requirement for ballot questions. When ballot question language is confusing, voters may choose to not vote on that issue, which eliminates their opportunity to impact public policy.

Sixteen states specify that ballot language must be easy to understand. We understand that ballot language is often constrained by legal requirements to make sure that it truly reflects the intent of the question based on legal standards. However, the League believes that certain measures can be taken by the State Board of Elections to meet those requirements while staying within the bounds of the law.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland urges a favorable report on SB 495.