

February 21, 2024

**Testimony on SB 515
Election Law – Voter Registration Age - Alterations
Education, Energy, and the Environment**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of SB 515, which lowers the minimum age of voter pre-registration from 16 to 15 years and $\frac{3}{4}$.

Young people already submit supporting documents to the MVA when they are first eligible to begin the driver's licensing process. This legislation would simply allow them to pre-register to vote at that time, lowering the current minimum age for pre-registration from 16 to 15 and $\frac{3}{4}$. Those who preregister to vote will still automatically become eligible voters once they turn 18.

This is a small change that would offer young people another early opportunity to begin engaging with our elections system. Scholarship has shown that pre-registration increases turnout and engagement for young voters, who have historically the least likely group to exercise their right to vote.

A friendly amendment we would suggest would be to require a notice be sent to pre-registered voters once they turn 18-years old, letting them know that they are eligible to vote and providing them with information on the voting methods and locations now available to them.

Preregistration helps ensure that young people are added to the voter file as soon as possible, making it more likely that they will be engaged directly by candidates and campaigns during the election cycle and hopefully piquing a lifelong interest in participating in our democracy.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.