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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Testimony in Support of SB 515 - Elections - Voter Registration Age - Alteration

In our state, the voting cohort with the lowest number of people is those between the ages of 18-24 years old. We must do more to increase the voter turnout of this group, and the most efficient way to do it is by increasing pre-registration. We already have flocks of students going to the MVA at 15 years and 9 months old to do their knowledge test for their learner permit, and we are wasting the opportunity of pre-registering them to vote.

Our residents are then forced to make another trip to the MVA if they would like to pre-register to vote at the age of 16, taking away their time for an action that could have been done earlier. Students today are focused on academics, extracurricular activities, family matters, and work. With so many opportunities for personal and academic growth, we cannot expect them to give up so much of their time for something so simple. It is an administrative oversight to restrict access to registration this way, and an opportunity to increase engagement with young voters and get them excited for future elections.

To aid in the turnout for our elections and increase civic involvement throughout the state, I propose SB515, which will lower the age at which a person can register to vote from 16 years old to 15 years and 9 months old. This will line the age for registration with the age at which one goes to the MVA to get their license.

We must do our best to support young voters, who are both the present and the future of this state. Making it easier to register to vote can only mean a more accurate election that truly represents our people and is better prepared to serve the various yet important needs of our constituents.

For this reason, I respectfully request a favorable committee report on SB 515.