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Patrick Moran – President

**Election Law-Automatic Voter Registration-Alterations
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

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AFSCME supports SB 605, and we ask the committee for a favorable report for the bill which alters automatic voter registration laws in Maryland.

Automatic Voter Registration has emerged as a key tool in expanding the accessibility and inclusivity of the electoral process. By automatically registering eligible citizens to vote when they interact with government agencies, AVR removes significant barriers to participation and ensures a more representative democracy. While Maryland has already implemented AVR, there is room for improvement and expansion to maximize its impact on voter turnout and engagement.

To upgrade the AVR system in Maryland, several steps can be taken. Firstly, it is crucial to streamline updates for registered voters. Driver license applicants who are already registered to vote and who provide a new address during their MVA transaction automatically have their information sent to elections officials as an address update. After receiving and processing the information from the MVA, election officials mail the applicant a notice informing them of the address update and providing an opportunity to correct the address update if necessary. A similar streamlined procedure would apply to applicants for Medicaid and health exchange plans, whose citizenship and eligibility the agency already confirms through existing processes.

The benefit of making these changes and others as suggested in the bill to the AVR system allows Maryland to register more eligible voters, especially those who have been left out by traditional methods. These upgrades also give us more complete, secure, and accurate registration records. It also promotes election integrity and can save election administration costs. By processing more registrations through the MVA, the upgraded system replaces paper registration forms that voters would otherwise mail or file in person. It also speeds up the MVA transaction, which reduces lines and wait times which is a benefit to our members at state agencies.

In conclusion, upgrading automatic voter registration in Maryland is a crucial step toward strengthening democracy and ensuring that all eligible citizens have the opportunity to participate in the electoral process. Maryland can enhance the impact and effectiveness of Automatic Voter Registration, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and representative democracy.

For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB605.

