LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MARYLAND

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

HB 641 Election Law – Curbside Voting

Position: Information Only

From: Linda Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters believes that election systems should increase voter participation and be equitable and accessible. HB 641 would require that local boards of election make available an option for curbside voting at one early voting center and at one location on election day. Voters would request curbside voting at the voting location and could request a paper ballot or use of a ballot marking device.

While we support the continuing development of options for voters to cast their ballot, curbside voting brings in a number of complexities that raise questions for us, including equipment, labor, chain of custody and privacy issues. In terms of equipment, curbside voting typically involves bringing the pollbook and either a ballot or marking device to the voter. Weather-proof pollbooks or ballot marking devices would be needed and could potentially divert equipment from the polling place. In terms of labor, additional election judges would be needed to support curbside voting at a time when boards of elections are struggling to enlist a sufficient number of judges. Chain of custody issues arise when paper ballots or equipment are moved around to support curbside voting. Pairs of judges from different parties would be required and while the bill notes that a paper ballot is deposited in a container provided by the election judge, it does not indicate the procedure if the voter uses a marking device. Privacy issues arise when a voter stays in their car but has a passenger who may be observing them. Further, curbside voting would have to be located in a non-electioneering zone but also in space where voters are not walking by to enter the polling location.

We support the intention behind offering curbside voting but because we do not yet understand how it would work in practice, we cannot yet support the bill.