

2024-02-20 IRGA Written Testimony in Support of MD

Uploaded by: Alexander Tischenko

Position: FAV

Institute *for* Responsive Government Action

The Institute for Responsive Government Action respectfully submits the following testimony in support of Senate Bill 515:

Senate Bill 515 would **expand opportunities for civic engagement** and electoral participation while **simultaneously saving taxpayer dollars**. It's a **win-win for government efficiency and responsiveness**. As such, the Institute for Responsive Government Action wholeheartedly supports the passage of Senate Bill 515.

Three simple facts demonstrate the importance of Senate Bill 515:

1. Under current law, Marylanders who are 16 years of age are permitted to pre-register to vote, provided they meet all other requirements for voter registration.
2. Although Marylanders can register to vote through a number of different methods, about 75% of Marylanders register to vote while applying for driver's licenses or IDs at the MVA.¹
3. Marylanders can apply for a driver's permit when they are 15 years and 9 months old.

As a result, the current 16-year-old cutoff for pre-registration prevents tens of thousands of Marylanders (those between the ages of 15 years, 9 months and 16 years) from pre-registering to vote through the MVA — the most convenient, efficient, and secure voter registration method available in the state.

Saving Taxpayer Dollars

If these Marylanders do eventually pre-register to vote at all, they are likely to do so through **other methods that are significantly more expensive for local election officials** to administer than voter registrations submitted through the MVA.

For example, studies have shown that a paper voter registration form submitted through a high-school voter registration drive costs about \$4.72 to process.² By contrast, voter

¹ United States Election Assistance Commission, [2022 EAVS Data Brief: Maryland](#) (2023).

² [Doug Chapin & David Kuennen, The Cost \(Savings\) of Reform: An Analysis of Local Registration-Related Costs \(2017\)](#).

registrations submitted through the MVA and transmitted electronically to election officials cost a fraction of that — as little as \$.03 in some jurisdictions.³

Expanding Civic Engagement and Participation

Several studies show that **pre-registration increases turnout among young voters**. A national study found that pre-registration increases turnout among young voters by as much as 13%.⁴ Similarly, in Florida, pre-registration increased turnout by as much as 10% among 18-year-olds in presidential elections, with particularly positive effects for young voters of color.⁵

Pre-registration also encourages long-term turnout in future elections. **Voting is habit forming, and young people who pre-register have consistently higher turnout rates over the course of several elections.**⁶

With this bill, the Maryland General Assembly has the opportunity to engage more young voters to actively participate in the democratic process. We can reinforce the idea that civic participation is a lifelong commitment, starting from an early age.

Thank you for your consideration,

Alex Tischenko
Senior Policy Advisor
Institute for Responsive Government Action

The Institute for Responsive Government Action is dedicated to ensuring state and federal governments work effectively for the very people they serve. Responsive Gov Action works to provide legislative advice and action, polling, and testimony in order to find practical policy solutions that make government systems more efficient, accessible, and responsive for everyday Americans.

³ See Washington Institute of the Study of Ethnicity and Race et al., *Online Voter Registration (OLVR) Systems in Arizona and Washington: Evaluating Usage, Public Confidence and Implementation Processes* (2010).

⁴ John Holbein & D. Sunshine Hillygus *Making Young Voters: The Impact of Preregistration on Youth Turnout*. *American Journal of Political Science* (2015).

⁵ Michael P. McDonald, *Voter Preregistration Programs* 24 (2009).

⁶ Michael P. McDonald & Matthew Thornburg, *Registering the Youth Through Voter Preregistration*, 13 *N.Y.U. J. LEGIS. & PUB. POL'Y* 551, 568 (2010).

Testimony in support of SB 515 .pdf

Uploaded by: Alonzo Washington

Position: FAV

ALONZO T. WASHINGTON
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Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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.

SB 515 LWVMD Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Jacquelyn Slade

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

SB 515 - Elections - Voter Registration Age - Alteration

POSITION: Favorable

BY: Linda Kohn, President

DATE: February 16, 2024

The League of Women Voters of Maryland, a nonpartisan organization with 1500 members statewide, advocates for an election system that is representative and increases voter participation. That's why we support Senate Bill 515, which aligns the age young voters can register with the age they can receive their Learner's Permit. This will allow those receiving their Learner's Permit before 16 to register at that time. This will help increase the representation of younger voters and imbue them with a sense of civic responsibility.

Eligible Marylanders ages 18 to 24 have lower rates of registration and voting than any other age group. According to US Census statistics from 2022, only about 55.7% of this cohort in Maryland is registered, and only 23.5% voted¹ This has gone down since 2018, when about 60% of this cohort was registered, and 38% voted.²

It's important to sponsor efforts that expand youth participation at every access point. According to Tufts University's Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 26% of students who didn't recall being encouraged to vote in high school agreed with the statement "Voting is a waste of time." The percentage of those who agreed dropped by half (to 12%) among young people who had been encouraged to vote in high school.³

The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), passed federally in 1993, requires every state to offer voter registration opportunities at motor vehicle agencies.⁴ However, this missed students who received a learners permit in Maryland before the age of 16. Since there is an established precedent through programs such as Motor Voter to allow young people to register when they get their license, the same should be true of all young people receiving a learner's permit. Those who may be too young now will

¹ <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-586.html>

² <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-583.html>

³ <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/youth-who-learned-about-voting-high-school-more-likely-become-informed-and-engaged>

⁴ <https://www.justice.gov/crt/national-voter-registration-act-1993-nvra>

be likelier to vote when they come of age since there will be more ways for them to easily register to vote.

In conclusion, the League of Women Voters urges a favorable report on SB 515.

SB0515_TCarterRoss_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: T Carter Ross

Position: FAV

Date of Hearing February 21

T. Carter Ross
Hyattsville, MD 20781

TESTIMONY ON SB 0515 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Elections – Voter Registration Age – Alteration

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: T. Carter Ross

OPENING: My name is T. Carter Ross. I am a resident of District 22. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 0515, an Act concerning Elections – Voter Registration Age – Alteration.

I write as a father and long-time advocate for school children. I have served on multiple committees within the City of Hyattsville and Prince George’s County Public Schools, and multiple PTAs/PTOs. That work has shown to me the value of public service, as well as the importance of encouraging people to engage with government as early and often as possible. It is a lesson I have worked to impart to my children and their peers, too.

Since 2010, Maryland has recognized the value of allowing teenagers to preregister to vote before their 18th birthday. Not only does this ease their ability to cast a ballot when eligible, it also provides opportunities to connect a simple real-world action (registering to vote) with the civics lessons they are learning in school.

Since 1988, Maryland has enabled people to register to vote through interactions with the Motor Vehicle Administration. In 2018, Maryland began automatically registering people to vote, if they were eligible and did not object, as part of getting a new driver’s license. Facilitating voter registration (and pre-registration) through the MVA makes good policy and fiscal sense, and streamlining the registration process is both efficient and convenient.

However, current rules limiting voter pre-registration to those 16 and older creates a disconnect between when teenagers can apply for a learner’s permit and when they can pre-register to vote. This bill fixes that by making the pre-registration age the same as the age at which one can seek a learner’s permit. Harmonizing these ages would allow the MVA to use the same system and process to connect learner’s permit applicants’ information with local boards of elections.

Being able to pre-register to vote has additional importance in the City of Hyattsville where I live. We are one of a least seven municipalities in Maryland that allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in municipal elections. In April 2022, my youngest turned 16 shortly before a special mayoral election in the city. She was able to take advantage of same-day registration to cast her first ballot, but had she been allowed to register when she got her learner's permit in January, it would have made that experience seamless.

Maryland has done a fantastic job in making sure everyone eligible to vote has a simple and readily available way to register to vote through the Moter Vehicle Administration. To ensure that all teenagers gain the same benefit, Maryland should harmonize the age for voter pre-registration with that of applying for a learner's permit. To that end, I fully support lowering the voter pre-registration age to 15 years and 9 months, and **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB 0515.**

Final FEC Testimony re MD SB 515 (prereg).pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Davis

Position: FWA



Maryland Senate
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 21, 2024
Submitted February 20, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 515, regarding voter preregistration. Fair Elections Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers to registration and voting through advocacy and impact litigation. The Center's Campus Vote Project educates and engages young voters on voting rights issues, working to institutionalize civic engagement and voting at university and college campuses, including in Maryland.

Preregistration permits otherwise-eligible citizens who are not yet of voting age to complete a voter registration application and automatically be added to the state's voter rolls when they turn eighteen. Such laws have been shown in other states to improve registration rates and to increase the likelihood that these young citizens will vote upon reaching voting age.¹ These laws prepare our young people for a future with fewer barriers to vote, expand opportunities for teens to organize in their communities, and assist students in developing early voting habits that will last a lifetime.

Reaching More Young People and Simplifying Administrative Processes: Maryland has been a leader in encouraging the participation of young voters. SB 515 would reduce the age at which an individual may preregister to vote, from sixteen years to fifteen years and nine months. This small change would align preregistration efforts with the age at which an individual can earn a learner's permit, simplifying administrative practices and reaching more young people. By closing this gap, Maryland can ensure that there are no missed opportunities for engaging with the young people who interact with the Maryland MVA: young people applying for their learner's permit will also be able to simultaneously preregister to vote.

Adjusting the preregistration age will also facilitate expanded voter registration efforts in high schools, allowing high school registration efforts to deepen their potential reach.

¹ Michael McDonald & Matthew Thornburg, Registering the Youth Through Voter Preregistration, 13 N.Y.U.J. LEGIS. & PUB. POL'Y 551 (2010), available at <http://www.nyuylpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Michael-P.-McDonald-Matthew-Thornburg-Registering-the-Youth-Through-Voter-Preregistration.pdf>.

Improving Pre-registrant Communications: Fair Elections Center and its Campus Vote Project urge the Senate to incorporate into SB 515 the improved notice procedures that are included in HB 436. The notice procedures in HB 436 would require that the voter notification card sent to preregistered voters under the age of eighteen clearly explain when that individual will become eligible to vote. Further encouraging participation, preregistered voters would receive an additional communication from the county election office when they become eligible to vote in the next scheduled primary election. This notification would contain information on the methods of voting and the locations of early voting centers and polling places, bridging the information gap that is a barrier for many new voters. These additional communications from county elections offices would minimize confusion and ensure young voters stay in the loop, and we urge the Senate to adopt them.

SB 515 would improve election administration and confirm for young Marylanders that their stake in the community is real and imminent. Fair Elections Center and its Campus Vote Project urge swift passage of this bill. If you would like further information, please feel free to contact Michelle Kanter Cohen, Policy Director and Senior Counsel at Fair Elections Center, at mkantercohen@fairelectionscenter.org.

SB 515 - Election Law - Voter Registration - Age a

Uploaded by: Morgan Drayton

Position: FWA

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.

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Uploaded by: Suzanne Duffy

Position: UNF

SB0515 is a slippery slope of **BAD Bills** and **What could go wrong?** In a time when public trust in elections is at an all time low, why create more distrust? SAY NO TO this bad bill and a very bad idea.

Suzanne Price

AACo

“Public trust in the federal government, which has been low for decades, has returned to near record lows following a modest uptick in 2020 and 2021. Currently, fewer than two-in-ten Americans say they trust the government in Washington to do what is right “just about always” (1%) or “most of the time” (15%). This is among the lowest trust measures in nearly seven decades of polling. Last year, 20% said they trusted the government just about always or most of the time.” PEW Research, Sept 2023
<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2023/09/19/public-trust-in-government-1958-2023/>