

HB0951_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

2/27/2024

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TESTIMONY ON HB#0951 – FAVORABLE

County Boards of Education - Voter Registration Link - Posting Requirement

TO: Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and members of the Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0951, County Boards of Education - Voter Registration Link - Posting Requirement

“Political involvement of citizens is one of the pinnacles of any functioning democracy.”¹ “Voting by citizens is critical to fuel strong democracies, yet voter participation is often disappointingly low.”² This bill recognizes that our schools are where students learn not only history and civics but can and should be taught to become engaged citizens. And that engagement begins with the act of voting.

Why aren't our 16 and 17 year old registering when they get a driver's license? The ALICE population in Maryland is close to 40% - those teenagers are less likely to be able to afford to have access to a car; insurance rates for teen drivers may prevent them from even applying for that license. In fact, 25.3% of age 16 has a license and only 42.1% of age 17 has their license.³

This bill will inform and encourage our 16 years old and older students to get registered or update that registration. While 16 year olds cannot vote they are, as registered voters, able to become the Election Judges that are critical in helping our elections function. And the increased pay rate can be a powerful incentive to taking those jobs. A 17 year old can vote in a primary as long as they are age 18 on or before Election Day so those new voters can vote in 2024.

Finally, the bill provides a methodology to verify the age of the registrant before directing them to the **non-partisan** Board of Elections website. This bill will, when implemented, provide more people becoming more participatory citizens in our local, state, and federal elections.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass HB0951.

¹ Lanning K. Democracy, voting, and disenfranchisement in the United States: A social psychological perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*. 2008;64(3):431–446. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00571.x.

² Desilver, D. (2018, November 3). *U.S. Trails most countries in voter turnout*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/21/u-s-voter-turnout-trails-most-developed-countries/>

³ <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2021/dl20.cfm>