



**TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

**HB 412 General Assembly – Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**BY: Linda Kohn, President**

**Date: February 6, 2024**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports HB 412, which proposes an amendment to the Maryland Constitution requiring a special election to fill a vacancy in the office of Delegate or Senator in the General Assembly, if the vacancy occurs more than fifty-five days prior to the filing deadline for the statewide election that is held in the second year of the term.

Legislative representatives should be elected by their constituents. Since 1985, the Maryland League of Women Voters has supported the use of special elections to fill vacancies in the office of Senator or Delegate. Recognizing the expense of special elections and the historically low voter turnout in such elections, the League supports tie-in special elections, to be held in conjunction with other regularly scheduled elections. This proposed legislation requires tie-in elections.

We are pleased that this legislation provides for a requirement for special elections to fill a Senator or Delegate vacancy that is uniform across jurisdictions in the state. Where appointments by the Governor rather than special elections are used to fill legislative vacancies, the League also supports additional statewide standards regulating the central committee nominating process to fill vacancies including:

- public notice of meetings within the vacated district for public input
- the public announcement of candidates prior to that meeting
- and a publicly recorded vote of each committee member.

The LWVMD strongly urges a favorable report on HB 412.