



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

### **HB 202 – Election Law – Absentee Ballots – Signature Requirements and Verification**

**POSITION: Oppose**

**BY: Linda Kohn, President**

**DATE: January 25 2024**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) believes that election systems should help increase voter participation and be feasible to implement. We oppose HB 202 because we do not believe it helps voters participate and it would be difficult to implement, creating a burden for both the voters and the boards of elections. It is unnecessary given Maryland's strong track record of conducting safe elections.

HB 202 would require that the ballot return envelope have a second signature from a witness in addition to the voter, imposing an entirely new step on the voter to cast a ballot. There is no effort to check the witness's signature to ensure it is someone over 18 or residing in Maryland. While a voter is given an opportunity to cure their own ballot if their signature is missing, it is unclear if the voter will be able to fix a missing signature from another person who served as witness. Signature verification also adds a layer of complexity to the work of the boards of elections, requiring additional technology, training and new procedures, incurring additional expense to conduct elections. Signatures change over time so more voter follow-up would be expected. Implementation is complex and slow if it is to be done in a way that does not improperly discard votes.

Because HB 202 would place additional burden on the voters, on the boards of elections, and additional costs on the taxpayers, we urge an unfavorable report.