



People on the Go of Maryland

House Bill 202

Election Law - Absentee Ballots -

Signature Requirements and Verification

Prohibiting a local board of elections from removing an absentee ballot from a return envelope or ballot/return envelope or counting the ballot unless the return envelope or ballot/return envelope is signed by the voter and, except under certain circumstances, a witness, and the local board verifies the voter's signature; and providing that the witness signature requirement does not apply to active duty uniformed services members serving overseas or their spouses or dependents who live overseas.

Position: Opposed

January 31, 2024

Sponsored by Delegate R. Long

Assigned to house Ways and Means

Written by Mat Rice

Executive Director - People On the Go of Maryland

Honorable Chairperson, and distinguished members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

People On the Go of Maryland (People On the Go) is a statewide self-advocacy organization, ran for and by those with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD)

People on the Go provides this written testimony and respectful opposition to House Bill 202 (HB 202).

This bill would require a local board of elections to verify an individual's signature before counting a mail-in ballot, and also require a witness be present to verify the signature first.

Requiring signature verification disproportionately affects individuals with disabilities, many of whom do not have a functional signature or use accommodations, such as name stamps, to vote. This measure would serve to disenfranchise them.

The additional requirement of needing to have a witness present to verify the signature, interferes with the voter's right to privacy. It also negates the convenience of being able to vote by mail in the first place. If a voter does not have a witness available, they will most likely be forced to vote in person.

In-person voting presents still more barriers, such as lack of transportation to the polling place. Once there, people with disabilities and elderly individuals frequently must wait in long lines, which may cause them significant and unendurable physical distress.

For all of these reasons, People On the Go strongly advises an unfavorable report for HB 202. Thank you for your consideration.

Should you have any questions. Please contact Mat Rice.

Thank you,

Mat Rice, Executive Director

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