



House Ways and Means Committee
**HB0220: Election Law – Absentee Ballots –
Signature Requirements and Verification**

February 13, 2024

Position: Oppose

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide membership organization that is dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and supporting their families.

We oppose HB0220 which would require a signature verification process and create an authority of a local board of elections to reject an absentee ballot/return envelope or counting the ballot unless it contains a “verified signature.”

Voting is a fundamental right guaranteed to every citizen of the United States, however certain groups have been excluded and disenfranchised from voting in our history through a series of laws, regulations, and practices such as signature verification requirements. We have concerns this bill will have a discriminatory effect and threaten equitable access to voting if the signature verification process prescribed in HB0220 is enacted in Maryland. Voters with disabilities may have difficulty holding a pen to sign. If a person is blind or has low vision they cannot see to sign an absentee ballot. In addition, requiring a witness to sign with the voter may very well violate privacy of the vote, and presents another barrier to a person with disabilities to find someone who can be the witness.

People with disabilities should not have to jump through unnecessary hoops and hurdles to exercise the right to vote, but HB0220 would create just that. For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on HB0220.

For more information, please contact: Ande Kolp, Executive Director, The Arc Maryland. akolp@thearcmd.org