

LILY QI  
Legislative District 15  
Montgomery County



The Maryland House of Delegates  
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Economic Matters Committee

*Chair*

Business Regulation Subcommittee

*House Chair*

Joint Committee on Federal Relations

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 6, 2024

Dear Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

HB 257 (Election Law – Affiliating With A Party and Voting – Unaffiliated Voter) aligns the party registration deadline with the in-person voter registration deadline. This allows unaffiliated voters to affiliate with a party and vote that same day at an early voting center during a primary election. This change will encourage disenfranchised communities to vote in closed primaries, reduce the waste of provisional ballots, and make our election system more equitable and democratic.

As of December 2023, 887,739<sup>1</sup> of Maryland's registered voters were unaffiliated with a party. Unaffiliated voters are also one of the fastest-growing in our state, with 35% of new voters in 2023 choosing to be unaffiliated. For reference, 42% registered as Democrat and 17% registered as Republican.

It is important to note that this will not create an open primary in Maryland, and it will not allow those already affiliated with a party to change their party affiliation during the specified time period. The Maryland State Board of Elections has also confirmed that this change is administratively feasible.

The vast majority of the unaffiliated voters in our state are young or first-time voters, new citizens, or voters who may have moved from a state with open primaries. It can be incredibly disappointing and discouraging for voters who had planned to participate in the election to be told they cannot participate fully. By allowing these voters, many of whom want to actively participate in our elections but may be skeptical of political systems or not know how our primaries work, we are creating a more democratic election system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lily Qi".

Delegate Lily Qi

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland State Board of Elections - [https://elections.maryland.gov/pdf/vrar/2023\\_12.pdf](https://elections.maryland.gov/pdf/vrar/2023_12.pdf)