

HB0153_Voter_Registration_Age_and_Notification_to_

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR HB0153
ELECTION LAW – VOTER REGISTRATION – AGE AND NOTIFICATION TO MINORS

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Fair

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0153 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

We agree with the League of Women Voters-MD that giving young residents an opportunity to register to vote when applying for a driver's permit is beneficial. HB0153 will allow voters as young as 15 years and 9 months to register to vote. Additionally, young voters can vote in primaries for candidates that will be on a general election ballot when they are 18 years old. The bill also provides an additional and earlier chance for Boards of Elections to engage young persons in the voting process. In fact, this bill requires Boards of Elections to provide more information and reminders in advance of a voter's first election, helping to build civic engagement. This law has the potential of making more lifelong, committed and high-information voter.

Our members appreciate efforts that result in more Marylanders becoming lifelong, committed and high-information voters.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee

HB153 Written Testimony - Senate Copy.pdf

Uploaded by: Kris Fair

Position: FAV



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

HB 153 - Election Law - Voter Registration - Age and Notification to Minors

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland Senate
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Esteemed Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

House Bill 153 seeks to lower the voter registration from age 16 to 15 years and 9 months. The bill also requires that voter notification cards be sent to minors, which include information about their future voting eligibility. This bill – which passed the House 106-32 last year—is not simply a 3-month change to the registration threshold but encourages a culture of civic engagement among our youth. It builds on the success of 1993’s Federal [“Motor Voter” Act](#) which mandates that states provide registration options at their Motor Vehicle Administrations, and 2010’s SB 292¹ and 1998’s HB 527² which allowed 16-year-olds to register to vote and 15-years-and-9-month-olds to get their learner’s permits.

Aligning Voter Registration with a Learning to Drive

By aligning the voter registration age with the age at which many young people apply for their learner’s permit, HB 153 integrates the important act of voter registration into another key rite of passage for youth, encouraging them to also learn about their responsibilities and rights as members of our society in addition to learning the rules of the road. This alignment ensures that the concepts of voting and civic engagement are reinforced at an age where they are already starting to engage more actively in their communities and take on societal responsibilities.

Easing the Transition to Voting Age

Lowering the voter registration age to fifteen years and nine months will ease the transition to voting age. This change provides young people more time to understand and appreciate the importance of their vote before they become eligible to cast it. It also allows educators and civic organizations more time to engage with future voters, providing them with the necessary tools and information to make informed decisions when the time comes.

¹ [SB 292](#) passed 100-40 in the House and 44-0 in the Senate

² [HB 527](#) passed 128-2 in the House and 47-0 in the Senate

Increasing Voter Engagement Among Young People

One of the greatest challenges in our democracy is increasing and retaining the engagement of younger voters. By introducing them to the voting process earlier, we are laying the groundwork for higher voter participation rates in this demographic during future election cycles. Research consistently shows that voting habits formed early in life tend to persist. Engaging school-age citizens in the democratic process at a younger and more formative age can lead to a lifetime of civic involvement.

Ensuring Informed Participation Through Voter Notification Cards

The final crucial aspect of this bill is the requirement that voter notification cards include information about future voting eligibility. These cards will serve as reminders and educational tools, better informing young people about when, where, and how they can vote. Clear information about the process is vital for accessibility and demonstrates to voters that the government wants to hear from its constituents. Informed voters are the cornerstone of a healthy democracy, and this provision ensures that our future voters are well-prepared to make their voices heard.

In conclusion, House Bill 153 is not just about changing a number—it's about empowering future generations, strengthening democracy, and ensuring every voice is heard. By passing this bill, we can send a clear message to our young people: their opinions matter, their participation is valued, and they are an integral part of our democratic fabric.

For these reasons, I urge your support for House Bill 153 and respectfully request a favorable report.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kris Fair".

Delegate Kris Fair
District 3, Frederick County

HB0153 Crossfile FAV - Election Law - Voter Regist

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB0153_Crossfile
Bill_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
04/02/2025

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#/0153 - FAVORABLE
Election Law - Voter Registration - Age and Notification to Minors

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0153 Election Law - Voter Registration - Age and Notification to Minors

This bill was passed in the House 103-34 on 02/13/25.

I am proud to support this effort by my Delegate Kris Fair and others to make the Frederick County Public Schools Strategic Plan Goal #1 a shared goal across the state of Maryland. That goal, in the goal area of *Organizational Culture of Achievement*, states “FCPS will equip each and every student to be an empowered learner and **an engaged citizen** to achieve a positive impact in the local and global community.”

Participation in voting and our political system is the essence of civics and citizenship. Not every student, especially in minority and lower income student populations, will go to the Department of Motor Vehicles and register to vote at that time. We are failing those students when we do not inform them that their cohort, just because they have access to an ability to drive, are registering. And since they can go to the DMV for a Learners Permit at age fifteen years and nine months we fail to get those under 16 years old new drivers as new voters. It is common sense to align the voting registration age with the Learners Permit availability age.

We are also missing out on the opportunity to recruit those newly registered voters to serve their community as election judges, a job which requires them to first register. Every year the local Board of Elections struggles to find election workers; this will expand the population from which they can focus their recruitment efforts.

Voter registration is a non-partisan activity, no partisan advantage is automatically conferred when that minor becomes a registered voter. If we are to increase teaching our youth that citizenship confers not only privileges but also responsibilities and requirements this bill facilitates that process.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0153.

HB0153_TCarterRoss_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: T Carter Ross

Position: FAV

Date of Hearing April 2

T. Carter Ross
Hyattsville, MD 20781

TESTIMONY ON HB 0153 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Election Law – Voter Registration – Age and Notification to Minors

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagen, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: T. Carter Ross

OPENING: My name is T. Carter Ross. I am a resident of District 22. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 0153, an Act concerning Election Law – Voter Registration – Age and Notification to Minors.

This is a common sense, good-governance measure that will make Maryland's Motor Voter process simpler and more rational by aligning the age at which one can preregister to vote with the age at which they may have their first interaction with the Motor Vehicle Administration.

I write as a father and long-time advocate for school children. I have served on multiple committees within the City of Hyattsville and Prince George's County Public Schools, and multiple PTAs/PTOs. That work has shown to me the value of public service, as well as the importance of encouraging people to engage with government as early and often as possible. It is a lesson I have worked to impart to my children and their peers, too.

Since 2010, Maryland has recognized the value of allowing teenagers to preregister to vote before their 18th birthday. Not only does this ease their ability to cast a ballot when eligible, it also provides opportunities to connect a simple real-world action (registering to vote) with the civics lessons they are learning in school.

Since 1988, Maryland has enabled people to register to vote through interactions with the Motor Vehicle Administration. In 2018, Maryland began automatically registering people to vote, if they were eligible and did not object, as part of getting a new driver's license. Facilitating voter registration (and pre-registration) through the MVA makes good policy and fiscal sense, and streamlining the registration process is both efficient and convenient.

However, current rules limiting voter pre-registration to those 16 and older creates a disconnect between when teenagers can apply for a learner's permit and when they can

pre-register to vote. This bill fixes that by making the pre-registration age the same as the age at which one can seek a learner's permit. Harmonizing these ages would allow the MVA to use the same system and process to connect learner's permit applicants' information with local boards of elections.

This is a common-sense change that improves the efficiency of our voter registration process and ensures more Maryland youth are able to cast their first ballot once they are able.

Being able to pre-register to vote has additional importance in the City of Hyattsville where I live. We are one of a least seven municipalities in Maryland that allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in municipal elections. My youngest turned 16 shortly before a special mayoral election in the city. She was able to take advantage of same-day registration to cast her first ballot, but if she'd been allowed to register when she got her learner's permit in January it would have made that experience seamless.

Maryland has done a fantastic job in making sure everyone eligible to vote has a simple and readily available way to register to vote through the Motor Vehicle Administration. To ensure that all teenagers gain the same benefit, Maryland should harmonize the age for voter pre-registration with that of applying for a learner's permit. To that end, I fully support lowering the voter pre-registration age to 15 years and 9 months, and I **respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 0153.**

2025 HB0153 Testimony Against 2025-04-02.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: UNF

HB0153 (Unfavorable)

Honorable Senators

I do not believe that the minimum age to register to vote should be reduced from 16 to 15 years and 9 months. Reducing the age just becomes an extra incentive to find local and school board elections where they could vote should the proposed Constitutional Amendment (HB0052) pass and allow those under 18 to vote.

Additionally, as stated by the Maryland Association of Elected Officials (MAEO) in its testimony in January, there are conversion costs if this bill should pass. MAEO informed the Delegates:

HB 153 would require sending additional correspondence to underage voters, informing them of when they will be eligible to vote in the next primary election. This change would bring added costs and administrative work, as election officials would need to identify the affected voters and send them the necessary notifications. MDVOTERS, Maryland's statewide voter registration system, would also require significant updates or software changes to accommodate these changes.

Additionally, Voter Notification Cards would need to be redesigned to include the specific date when these voters become eligible to vote

Please enter an Unfavorable report for HB0153.

Alan Lang
45 Marys Mount Road
Harwood, Maryland 20776
Legislative District 30B
410-336-9745
April 2, 2025

HB153.DDCouncil.LOI.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel London

Position: INFO



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
HB 153: Election Law - Voter Registration - Age and Notification to Minors
April 2, 2025

Letter of Information

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need.

Voting is a fundamental right that Maryland's citizens with developmental disabilities want and need to access. Researchers have found that more accessible voting options available in the 2020 election, 62% of people with disabilities voted (a six-point increase over 2016)¹. Additional methods to increase accessibility may allow even more people with disabilities to vote. This is why the Council advocates for policies and practices that makes voting more accessible and inclusive for all Marylanders.

We understand the intention of this bill aligns with our values of making elections more accessible for all. If HB153 is passed, the State Board of Election should ensure that the communication about voting eligibility is not just made available to individuals 15 years and 9 months old, but that the communication is also fully accessible. The best way to do this is by continuing to work with disability advocates in the community.

Contact: Dr. Stephanie Dolamore, Deputy Director, SDolamore@md-council.org

¹ https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Centers/Program_Disability_Research/FactSheet_Disability_Voter_Turnout_2020.pdf