

## **HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS**

**MARCH 18, 2025**

### **Senate Bill 259 - Election Law – Local Boards of Elections – Election Plan Requirements POSITION: SUPPORT**

Disability Rights Maryland is the Protection & Advocacy agency of Maryland, mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 259.

SB 259 seeks to require local boards of elections to submit election plans at least seven months prior to a general election to the State Board of Elections. It also requires a continued review and alteration of the election plan in partnership with the State Board of Elections. The guidelines established by SB 259 set the standard for local boards of election to approach election planning by prioritizing all Marylanders and require local boards to report back to the State Board regarding both the practical implementation of the election plan and barriers that impede progress. These requirements help safeguard against potential disenfranchisement while keeping the public informed of these continued efforts.

Among other outlined measures that specifically seek to bolster the ability to vote for Marylanders with disabilities, the bill requires an analysis of available buildings in voting precincts that includes a determination of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) if a local board of election's plan intends to reduce the number of polling locations offered to residents.

SB 259 is a strong bill that requires local government to meet the voting needs of Marylanders with oversight from the State Board of Elections. This bill strengthens the overall protection of residents' voting rights, and specifically addresses the voting rights of people with disabilities through physical access to their polling places.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report on SB 259. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [GillianJ@DisabilityRightsMD.org](mailto:GillianJ@DisabilityRightsMD.org) or by phone at 443-692-2498.

Respectfully Submitted,

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