



## TESTIMONY FOR HB0201

### **Absentee Ballot Application - Sending to Eligible Voters Before Primary Elections**

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Wilkins

**Committee:** Ways and Means

**Organization Submitting:** Shore Progress

**Person Submitting:** Jared Schablein, Chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0201 on behalf of Shore Progress. Shore Progress (formerly LSPC) is a nonpartisan civic organization covering the Eastern Shore of Maryland. We support this bill as an essential measure to expand access to voting and ensure that all eligible Marylanders have the opportunity to participate in our democracy.

This legislation requires local boards of elections to send absentee ballot applications to all eligible voters at least 60 days before statewide primary elections, unless the voter has permanent absentee ballot status. Why We Support This Bill:

**Increasing Voter Access:** This bill ensures that voters, particularly those who face barriers to in-person voting, have ample time to request a ballot and participate in elections by proactively providing absentee ballot applications.

**Encouraging Participation:** Many voters are unaware of absentee ballot options or deadlines. Automatically sending applications helps eliminate confusion and empowers voters to exercise their rights.

**Streamlined Administration:** The 60-day timeline gives election officials and voters sufficient time to process and return applications, reducing last-minute challenges and ensuring an orderly process.

**Equity in Voting Access:** Absentee voting is especially critical for voters with disabilities, seniors, and those with inflexible schedules. This bill ensures these groups have equitable access to voting resources.

**Strengthening Democracy:** Encouraging absentee voting expands participation, increases turnout, and enhances the inclusivity of our democratic process, particularly in primary elections where turnout is often low.

This bill represents a simple yet impactful step toward making voting more accessible, equitable, and efficient for all Marylanders. We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.