

**HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**  
**January 21, 2025**  
**HB 153 - Election Law - Voter Registration –**  
**Age and Notification to Minors**  
**Position: SUPPORT**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM – formerly Maryland Disability Law Center) is the Protection & Advocacy agency in Maryland, federally mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM works to increase opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities to be part of their communities through voting by advocating for equal and equitable access to the ballot.

HB 153 promotes increased civic inclusion in elections. HB 153 introduces important updates to voter registration laws by allowing individuals to preregister to vote at 15 years and 9 months old and improving communication to minors about their voting eligibility. These changes would offer younger people an early opportunity to begin engaging with our elections system. Engaging individuals in the democratic process early on increases the likelihood of lifelong voter participation, a benefit that extends to historically marginalized communities, including youth with disabilities.

Earlier voter engagement leads to a higher likelihood of voter empowerment. For many individuals with disabilities, the voting process involves distinct barriers, including inaccessible voting sites, limited awareness of voting rights, and the need for accommodations. By increasing preregistration opportunities and providing younger people with voting information, HB 153 helps foster early civic engagement and equips younger voters with the tools they need to participate fully in the democratic process. Such improvements will likely also have a positive impact on youth with disabilities who may require additional time and support to navigate voter registration and understand their rights.

The provisions requiring voter notification cards and election director notices for preregistered individuals under 18 provide useful information that will assist young voters, including those with disabilities, prepare for their first election.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 153. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [GabrielR@DisabilityRightsMD.org](mailto:GabrielR@DisabilityRightsMD.org), or by phone at 443-692-2483.

Respectfully submitted,

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