

KRIS FAIR
Legislative District 3
Frederick County

Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Education

Election Law



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 306
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3472
800-492-7122 Ext. 3472
Kris.Fair@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

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

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Lowe House of Delegates Building, 6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkins, and Esteemed Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

House Bill 436 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.

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 concept of voting is introduced 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.

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 436 and respectfully request a favorable report.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kris Fair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Delegate Kris Fair
District 3, Frederick County