



MARYLAND FORWARD PARTY

Not Left. Not Right. Forward.

BILL NO: HB0156

TITLE: Election Law - Affiliating With a Party and Voting - Unaffiliated Voters

COMMITTEE: Government, Labor and Elections

POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

DATE: February 4, 2026

TO: Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee

FROM: Maryland Forward Party

SUBJECT: Supporting Increased Voter Participation (with Amendments)

Maryland Forward Party appreciates the intent of HB0156 to expand participation for unaffiliated voters, who represent a large part of our growing coalition. However, the bill remains restrictive in its current form, and we **urge an amendment to HB0156** to address these barriers.

As drafted, the bill would allow unaffiliated voters to affiliate with a party and vote only by provisional ballot at an early voting center. This creates unnecessary barriers and uncertainty for voters and election administrators alike.

Maryland's growing unaffiliated electorate deserves a clear and consistent path to participation. We **recommend amending HB0156 to align with the framework of HB0496**, which allows unaffiliated voters to choose a party ballot without being forced into permanent partisan affiliation. Additionally, this supports administrative efficiency by reducing the burden on election judges to manually process and verify provisional ballots.

Maryland Forward Party believes reforms should prioritize voter access and administrative efficiency. We thank the sponsor for this initiative and urge a report of **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** on HB0156.

Sincerely,

Lee Bradshaw

Legislative Committee Chair

Maryland Forward Party