

HB0115_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

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Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#/0115- POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#/0115, **Election Law - Affiliating With a Party and Voting - Unaffiliated Voters**

Issuelab.org has studied the problem in their article *Not Invited to the Party Primary – Independent Voters and the Problem with Closed Primaries*¹

More Americans than ever before — 43% — identify as independent voters. Meanwhile, only 27% each identify as Republicans and Democrats. Independent voters excluded from primaries (“Excluded Independents”) hold a diversity of political beliefs from across the ideological spectrum. Their perspectives call into question long-held beliefs that most independents are merely “weak partisans.” Independents believe their exclusion from primaries is unfair, support reforming the primary system, and would participate in primaries if allowed to do so.... However, they remain swing voters open to being persuaded.

We need to have EVERY voice heard in voting – this bill will facilitate that and recognize the issues around closed primary elections by authorizing unaffiliated voters to request to affiliate with a political party at an early voting center during a primary election and vote a provisional ballot for the voter's preferred political party; and requiring an election judge to determine whether the voter resides in the county in which the voter seeks to vote.

It is time to open the political processes to every voter in every incidence of voting.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#/0115.

¹ <https://search.issuelab.org/resources/43491/43491.pdf>