



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SB 647 Election Law – Institutions of Higher Education – Voter Registration and Voting by Students (Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents

Date: February 20, 2020

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active citizen participation. We are concerned that voter registration and participation among younger voters continues to be much lower than for older citizens.

Although Maryland has made great strides in making voter registration convenient, not all eligible voters are aware of the procedures for registering to vote, to obtain an absentee ballot, or the times and locations for voting. This can be especially challenging for college students who are away from their homes and must choose whether to register at their college address or request an absentee ballot in sufficient time to return it.

By requiring covered higher education institutions to provide students with convenient links to official election websites, SB 647 will ensure that lack of information will not be a barrier to registering and voting. The bill will also require collaboration between local Boards of Elections and the colleges regarding the location of polling places on the campuses of colleges enrolling more than 4,500 students.

The LWVMD representing more than 1,500 concerned citizens throughout Maryland, urges a favorable report on SB 647.