

Bertrand_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Bertrand, Sophie

Position: FAV

Sophie Bertrand, Towson University, Student Ambassador with The Andrew Goodman Foundation

Testimony for SB647

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Thursday Feb. 6, 2020
Election Law - Institutions of Higher Education - Voter Registration and Voting by Students (Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)

POSITION: FAVORABLE

My name is Sophie Bertrand, and I am the lead student Ambassador of the chapter of the Andrew Goodman Vote Everywhere program at Towson University. I've worked for the past four years on encouraging student democratic involvement and civic engagement through partnering with numerous campus organizations and seeking to enact campus change to make the democratic process more accessible for students, so this bill is of particular interest to me. I thank the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to share my story and opinions.

On my campus, students are provided with a plethora of resources about voting, and I believe that all educational institutions within the state should have this opportunity. We are afforded a voter hub on the campus website, a team of student Ambassadors dedicated to encouraging political engagement and education, a branch of the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility dedicated to political engagement, and more. Towson University also has access to polling locations on campus for both early and Election Day voting.

I believe that all of these are integral factors that contribute significantly to our voter turnout rates. The 2018 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement reported Towson University to have surpassed voter turnout rates for other institutions by 3.1%, and voter turnout rates for the national youth population by 6.2%. Perhaps these results could be replicated by instituting similar measures on campuses throughout the state, as suggested in this legislation.

Towson University is lucky in that we have been afforded the privilege of a team on campus dedicated to providing students with resources relating to voting and political engagement. The Student Voter Empowerment Act ensures that students across the state would have the resources and information necessary to register and turn out to vote. This is exactly what is needed on college and university campuses to foster a healthy democracy within the youth population and create positive habits pertaining to civic engagement.

The passage of this bill would encourage the younger voting bloc to turnout by facilitating the formation of healthy habits of democratic engagement, thus producing youth who are more likely to become life-long voters. Additionally, the demonstrated support of officeholders and government officials would not only greatly emphasize the significance of regular democratic engagement to younger demographics, but would also indicate concern for issues young voters care about and encourage their engagement with representatives that attempt to connect with them.

Thank you again for your consideration of this legislation. I strongly urge you to give this bill a favorable report.

CCMD_Tierra Bradford_Fav_SB0647

Uploaded by: Bradford, Tierra

Position: FAV

February 20, 2020

Testimony on SB 647
Election Law - Institutions of Higher Education - Voter Registration and Voting by Students (Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 647 which would require college campuses with populations over 4500 to have a polling place on their campus during elections. It also requires the State Board of Elections to maintain a page on its website that includes clear information about voter registration and voting by students enrolled in institutions of higher education. Additionally, college campuses would have a student voting coordinator develop and implement a plan to increase student voter registration.

Institution of higher education throughout the state should be doing all that they can to encourage voter participation on their campus communities. HB 245 provides them with straightforward opportunities to do so. Something as simple as establishing polling locations on local campuses can improve the voter turnout amongst students and staff. Universities are already centers of diversity and learning so they are in a good position to educate students about how to become more politically involved.

For many students going to college is their first time stepping out into the real world and gaining independence. Some are far from home and loved ones, but are still trying to build a life where they can be an educated citizen with a stable future. Politics may seem intimidating to some students. With this new policy, students will approach this fundamental part of democracy feeling encouraged not discouraged.

We have an opportunity to ensure that young voter turnout continues to rise and this can be done by putting pressure on our government and educational institutions to see the value in educating students and their community about our democracy. These institutions teach our society's future engineers, scientists, medical professionals and artists and are fully capable of teaching those same students about the rights and political power they have as a citizen.

We urge a favorable report.

ACY_JameshaCaldwell_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Caldwell, Jamesha

Position: FAV

To: Chair Pinsky and members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
From: Jamesha Caldwell, Education Policy Legislative Intern
Re.: **SB 647: Election Law - Institutions of Higher Education - Voter Registration and Voting by Students (Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)**
Date: February 20, 2020
Position: Support

As of 2018, the national average of college student voting participation has more than doubled since its previous rate of 19% in 2014¹. For institutions such as the Maryland Institute College of Art, the average college student voting participation is ten points higher than the national average of 39.1%. This is due to its participation in the Campus Democracy Challenge; a national task force aimed to increasing civic learning and engagement on college campuses². It is evident that **when college students are empowered through education, access, and representation, the likelihood of healthy civic engagement among our college students substantially increases.**

Historically, many social and political conversations surrounding the results of low voter turnout have done tremendous work in identifying, analyzing, and rectifying the consequences of disenfranchisement for many marginalized populations. But sometimes, in those very conversations of disenfranchisement, college students are underrepresented in the allocation of concrete solutions. The 2018 local and national increase in college student voting participation represents a larger and concealed narrative for many Maryland college students. At a glance, the increase represents a surging and energized group of young voters who aim to have their voices counted and represented in the ballot. However, for many other college students, the lack of fundamental resources related to voter education, polling accessibility, and civic support can cause a detrimental and dramatic flux in political representation.

SB 647 would work to ensure that the increase seen in the 2018 national and local elections would remain continuous in the state of Maryland through the implementation of voting coordinators, student voting plans, and on-campus polling in Higher Education Institutions. Through this, SB 647 would reduce the occurrence of disenfranchisement for college students while also promoting equitable access to voter education and engagement practices. For the reasons above, **ACY strongly urges a favorable report on this bill.**

¹ National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), 2018

² MICA Voter Access Initiative Fall Summary, 2018

Hanmer_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Hanmer, Mike

Position: FAV



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

SB647: Election Law - Institutions of Higher Education - Voter Registration and Voting by Students (Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 20th, 2020
Michael Hanmer, University of Maryland

My name is Michael Hanmer. I am a professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland, College Park. My research and teaching interests focus on political participation and public opinion, with an emphasis on how citizens respond to electoral reforms, and mobilization efforts. Several of my projects have focused specifically on understanding college student voter registration and turnout.

I have had the pleasure of working with students on my campus and participating in various workshops with students from across the University of Maryland System. I have been incredibly impressed with their ideas, motivation, and dedication to civic engagement.

College students are at a key moment in their development as citizens. It is a meaningful step for state government to recognize students' interests and encourage their participation. The benefits to the individual students will be clear in both the short term and long term. My research, and that of others, shows that students are highly motivated to participate and are responsive to efforts to engage them. I have seen this in action. For example, the TerpsVote coalition, a group of students, staff, and faculty at the University of Maryland, College Park, worked with the Registrar to ensure a voter registration link was placed prominently on the Registrar's website. TerpsVote also created a clear action plan, and implemented it with great success, helping maintain a high level of voter registration and dramatically increasing voter turnout in 2018. But there is much more room for improvement overall, and in particular among students who major in STEM fields, where registration and turnout rates tend to be much lower than average.

Beyond the benefits of participation to the individual students, I expect to see a broader set of benefits. I believe this will come from helping colleges and universities fulfill their missions to provide a comprehensive education and create new knowledge through research. Based on my experience working with students I believe this bill can be used to help spur innovation in courses, including new experiential learning opportunities. It will also help generate new research opportunities for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty. Moreover, I expect that when students recognize the support the state and their campuses have provided to enrich their experience that their sense of connection will also be strengthened.

I encourage you to give the bill a favorable report.

Jackson_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Jackson, Kayla

Position: FAV



Nykidra “Nyki” Robinson, Founder & CEO
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Black Girls Vote, Inc.

Testimony for SB0647

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Thursday, February 20, 2020

**Election Law - Institutions of Higher Education - Voter Registration and Voting by
Students**

(Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)

Position: Favorable

My name is Kayla Jackson. I am a student at Morgan State University (MSU) and a collegiate member of Black Girls Vote, Inc. (BGV), a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization committed to engaging, educating, and empowering women to activate their voice by using their vote. I would like to thank the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to share why this issue is important to me. I also extend a special thank you to Senator Lam for introducing the bill and being a consistent advocate for Maryland democracy.

I am a strong believer in using the electoral process to improve the quality of life for my family and the collective community. Therefore, I urge the Senate to vote in favor of SB0647, the Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020 (SVEA). We must do more to improve youth voter participation; this bill does exactly that. With registered voters under the age of 29 representing an increasing portion of the American electorate, the SVEA targets this demographic. The SVEA ensures that students have the resources and information necessary to register to vote and is designed to increase voter participation and turnout among students.

Maryland is home to many world class institutions of higher education. It is important that students on these campuses are able to easily engage in the democratic process. As a member of BGV’s collegiate chapter on MSU’s campus, we aim to register as many students as possible to vote. Throughout the academic year, we host voter registration “pop-ups”, information panels, and fundraisers. Most recently, we partnered with a local chipotle to raise funds to support our collegiate chapter and voter education initiatives.

The SVEA would assist our efforts by providing student voter education, organizational support, and transportation. These increased resources will allow students to become more aware of the



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issues and policies that affect them directly, while establishing a habit of voting early on. Additionally, the SVEA offers a convenient and safer option to those commuting to the polls.

Although voting is voluntary, its importance and accessibility cannot be overshadowed. It is our civic duty. Respectfully, I urge all committee members to please vote in favor of SB0647. Thank you for your time and consideration.

MSEA_Sean Johnson_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Johnson, sean

Position: FAV

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 647
Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020**

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 20, 2020
1:00 PM**

**Sean Johnson
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 647 that seeks to expand election awareness and voting information to students in Maryland's colleges and universities. We support efforts that enhance citizen participation in the political process, and this legislation does just that by creating intention in how college students are engaged and made aware of how they can participate in elections on campus or through the absentee voting process.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for the careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Simply put, we want to help connect students to their civic responsibilities and opportunities, including through increased participation in the political and electoral process. We know such engagement will bring about a more informed citizenry and an expanded electorate. Considering the issues and challenges facing our state and country, it is imperative that we have as many people engaged, educated, and prepared to exercise their franchise to help determine the direction of our communities.

At a time when other states are debating how to make it harder to vote, Maryland should continue to lead the way to increase participation in our democracy. **We urge a favorable report of Senate Bill 647.**

ACLU_Morton_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Morton, Brielle

Position: FAV



**Testimony for the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee
February 20, 2020**

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

BRIELLE MORTON
PUBLIC POLICY INTERN

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OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS
JOHN HENDERSON
PRESIDENT

The ACLU of Maryland supports SB 647, which provides convenient access to the voting process on institutions of higher education in the State. This would include a coordinator to guide students through the process, links for voter registration in the same websites for class registration, and polling on campus.

Civic engagement and political activism are perhaps most acute on the college campus, as young people gain access to the franchise, become engaged within their communities and grow passionate about social, economic, and political issues. In *Symm vs. United States*, the Supreme Court upheld students' rights to register and vote in their college town, if they consider it to be their primary residence. *Symm v. United States*, 439 U.S. 1105 (1979).

Almost four decades since that decision, college students continue to face hurdles in accessing the ballot, through burdensome voter restriction rules, new voter ID laws, or the absence of voting booths on campus. HB 245 would make more meaningful the Supreme Court's decision in *Symm* by allowing students to more practically access voter polls on college campuses. Moreover, ease of access to the ballot encourages students to engage in the political discourse.

In the 2012 Maryland general election, 38.3% of eligible young voters (ages 18-24) did not vote.¹ On the national scale, young voters continue to have the

¹ Maryland State Board of Elections, Voter Turnout by Age Group, Maryland 2012 General Election. Available at http://www.elections.state.md.us/press_room/2012_stats_general/2012_general_voter_turnout_byage.pdf.



AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
FOUNDATION

Maryland

lowest turnout, in the 2018 midterms, roughly 36% voted; the lowest rate compared to the other age groups.²

Mobility is a major barrier to voting among college students.

Studies show that lack of access to transportation as well as lack of time for long distance travel is a major factor deciding voter turnout.³ This disproportionately affects working students. Nationally, less than half of college students have cars on campus, but this number varies greatly by college - such as Johns Hopkins in Baltimore with 0%.⁴ Many colleges also have restrictions on having vehicles on campus, often geared towards freshmen and sophomores. Without transportation, students would turn to the absentee ballot, but often do not because of a confusing campus mailing system and lack of understanding of the process. Thus, students need guidance and on-campus access.

These statistics demonstrate a clear barrier in access to the ballot for young people and HB 245 has the potential to remedy it. For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland supports SB 647.

² Census Bureau, Change in Voter Turnout By Characteristic: 2014 to 2018. Available at <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/04/behind-2018-united-states-midterm-election-turnout.html>

³ Niemi, R. G., & Hanmer, M. J. (2010). Voter Turnout Among College Students: New Data and a Rethinking of Traditional Theories. *Social Science Quarterly*, 91(2), 301–323.

⁴ <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/the-short-list-college/articles/2018-03-06/11-national-universities-where-students-rarely-bring-cars>

Robinson_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Robinson, QuaAsia

Position: FAV



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Black Girls Vote, Inc.

Testimony for SB0647

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Thursday, February 20, 2020

**Election Law - Institutions of Higher Education - Voter Registration and Voting by
Students**

(Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)

Position: Favorable

My name is QuaAsia Robinson. I am a student at Morgan State University (MSU) and a collegiate member of Black Girls Vote, Inc. (BGV), a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization committed to engaging, educating, and empowering women to activate their voice by using their vote. I would like to thank the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to share why this issue is important to me. I also extend a special thank you to Senator Lam for introducing the bill and being a consistent advocate for Maryland democracy.

I am a strong believer in using the electoral process to improve the quality of life for my family and the collective community. Therefore, I urge the Senate to vote in favor of SB0647, the Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020 (SVEA). We must do more to improve youth voter participation; this bill does exactly that. With registered voters under the age of 29 representing an increasing portion of the American electorate, the SVEA targets this demographic. The SVEA ensures that students have the resources and information necessary to register to vote and is designed to increase voter participation and turnout among students.

Maryland is home to many world class institutions of higher education. It is important that students on these campuses are able to easily engage in the democratic process. As a member of BGV’s collegiate chapter on MSU’s campus, we aim to register as many students as possible to vote. Throughout the academic year, we host voter registration “pop-ups”, information panels, and fundraisers. Most recently, we partnered with a local chipotle to raise funds to support our collegiate chapter and voter education initiatives.

The SVEA would assist our efforts by providing student voter education, organizational support, and transportation. These increased resources will allow students to become more aware of the



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issues and policies that affect them directly, while establishing a habit of voting early on. Additionally, the SVEA offers a convenient and safer option to those commuting to the polls.

Although voting is voluntary, its importance and accessibility cannot be overshadowed. It is our civic duty. Respectfully, I urge all committee members to please vote in favor of SB0647. Thank you for your time and consideration.

LAM_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Senator Lam, Senator Lam

Position: FAV

CLARENCE K. LAM, M.D., M.P.H.
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Baltimore and Howard Counties



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Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Committee

Executive Nominations Committee

Joint Committee on Ending Homelessness

Chair

Joint Committee on Fair Practices and
State Personnel Oversight

Chair

Howard County Senate Delegation

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Support SB647: ELECTION LAW - INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION - VOTER REGISTRATION AND VOTING BY STUDENTS (STUDENT VOTER EMPOWERMENT ACT OF 2020)

Background:

- According to the Campus Vote Project, Millennials and Gen Z will be the largest share of eligible voters in 2020. These groups have not been the largest share of the electorate in past elections because of their lower voting rates.
- Although young adults (ages 18-29) made up about 21% of the voting eligible population in 2014, their voter turnout reached record lows in recent years.

The Issue:

- College students tend to be geographically mobile, lower-income citizens, young voters and voters of color, partly by virtue of their age. These characteristics are representative of many students at our universities.
- According to Washington Monthly magazine, only 3 out of the Best 80 Colleges for Student Voting, were in Maryland. Considering that there are over 50 higher education institutions in Maryland (according to the Maryland Higher Education Commission) it is clear that our state can do better.

What SB647 does:

- Requires public institutions of higher education to dedicate a staff member to be a student voting coordinator. This coordinator will:
 - Craft and implement a student voting plan
 - Create and disseminate information about voter registration & voting opportunities
 - Establish a website with information about and links to the State registration process, deadlines, early voting process, polling places, transportation options, etc.
 - Create and implement a plan to increase student voter student registration that includes a policy allowing excused absence for voting
- Encourages early polling placement on campus if possible
- Establish a separate precinct on the campus of a public or private institution of higher education that awards baccalaureate degrees, enrolls 4,500 or more students, and provides on-campus housing to students
- Requires annual reports regarding student voting

Why is SB647 needed?

- Passage of this bill will help to ensure that more students at colleges and universities throughout the state are better informed about the electoral process and can more easily participate in a core democratic process.

Additional information:

- Key facts about youth voting:
 - From 1972 to 2016, the proportion of youth ages 18 to 24 who reported voting in presidential elections decreased from 50 to 39 percent.
 - In 2018, young people ages 18-24
 - 45.7% reported to be registered to vote, and
 - 30.1% reported voted
 - In 2018, across the US for all ages:
 - 61.3% reported to be registered to vote, and
 - 49.0% reported voted
 - The percentage of youth who reported voting in 2014, a nonpresidential election year, was 16 percent—markedly lower than in the 2016 presidential election (39 percent). This pattern has been consistent since 1972.
 - In 2016, young women reported registering to vote and voting (53 and 42 percent, respectively) at higher rates than their male peers (49 and 37 percent, respectively).

Shah_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Shah, Rishi

Position: FAV



Testimony for SB0647

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Thursday, Feb. 20, 2020
Election Law - Institutions of Higher Education - Voter Registration and Voting by Students (Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Maryland PIRG is a state based, non-partisan, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state and a student funded, student directed chapter at the University of Maryland College Park. For forty five years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society. That includes a long history of working to help students register and vote.

We should make every effort to increase voter participation by making voter registration and the act of voting simple and accessible to all eligible voters. Unfortunately, many eligible Maryland voters, especially young Marylanders, are not voting.

Thanks to the important work of this committee, Maryland has made great strides to modernize our voter registration systems through same-day voter registration and automatic voter registration. The Student Voter Empowerment Act adds another important tool to help ensure participation.

Voting serves as a building block to more active involvement in civic life. In Maryland PIRG's 45-year history of working with young people and running non-partisan voter registration drives, we have found that most young people want to and intend to participate in voting, but as new voters, they often struggle to navigate the voter registration system or forget they need to update their registration every time they move.

In the 2016 presidential election, turnout in Maryland as a percentage of the voting population was at its lowest in 24 years. In 2018, [turnout of voters under 29 was at 36% compared to 53.4% of all eligible voters](#) turned out. While this was an increase of 10% in youth voter participation since the last midterm election, it is not good enough. [Numerous studies](#) have shown that voting is habit forming, and youth who vote are more likely to become life-long voters.

Likewise, [young people who are registered to vote turn out in high numbers, very close to the rate of older voters](#). The voter registration gap in young people is a driving force in low youth voter participation. In 2018, [only 54% of Marylanders aged 18-24 were registered to vote, compared to 66% of all Marylanders](#) over the age of 18. In order to increase civic participation we need to help young people get registered to vote and ensure they have the tools and information they need to turn out on Election Day.

During the 2018 midterm elections, for example, Maryland PIRG students helped register and turn out more than 2,800 University of Maryland students to vote. Election after election in states across the country we have found that if we ask students to vote and help them navigate the system, they will.

We should reduce the barriers faced by young people trying to register to vote and go to the polls. The Student Voter Empowerment Act ensures that:

1. Universities with over 4,500 undergraduate students will have a polling location on campus;
2. Universities will post the link to the online voter registration form on the website students use to register for classes to keep it visible;
3. Public universities will have a student voter coordinator, who will take point on forming a plan to support student voter registration and ensure students have information about voter registration and how to vote, including locations, dates, and transportation options on Election Day.

Maryland should take this opportunity to step up and be a national leader on democracy issues. We can encourage first time and young voters, increase civic participation, and build a more functional democracy.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

Student Voter Empowerment Act

Increasing Student Voter Participation

Delegate Luedtke (HB235) and Senator Lam (SB0647)

We must do more to increase youth voter participation.

- In 2018, national turnout of voters under 29 was at 36% compared to 53.4% for all eligible voters. [1]
- Numerous studies have shown that voting is habit-forming, and youth who vote are more likely to become life-long voters. [2]

The voter registration gap drives low youth voter participation.

- In 2018, only 54% of Marylanders aged 18-24 were registered to vote, compared to 66% of all Marylanders over the age of 18. [3]
- Young people who are registered to vote turn out in high numbers, very close to the rate of older voters. [4]

What the bill does:

1. Public universities must provide a voter registration link on the homepage of the website students use to register for courses.
2. Universities with more than 4,500 undergraduate students must have a polling location on campus.
3. Public universities shall designate a staff member to be the student voting coordinator and develop a “student vote plan” which:
 - Comes from collaboration with faculty, staff, and students at the university.
 - Includes voter registration and education about how to vote including locations, dates, and transportation options on Election Day.
 - Supports student organizations aimed at increasing voter registration and participation.



Contact:
Rishi Shah
Democracy Campaign Associate
rshah@marylandpirg.org

[1] Misra, Jordan. "Voter Turnout Rates Among All Voting Age and Major Racial and Ethnic Groups Were Higher Than in 2014," 23 April 2019, United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/04/behind-2018-united-states-midterm-election-turnout.html>.

[2] "Voting is a Habit," February 2007, Young Voter Strategies, https://www.rockthevote.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/research/rtv_voting_is_a_habit-2007.pdf

[3] "Reported Voting and Registration by Age, for States: November 2018", US Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-583.html>

[4] "Youth Voting," CIRCLC, <https://civicyouth.org/quick-facts/youth-voting/>.

Soreng_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Soreng, Nancy

Position: FAV



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.

Townes_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Townes, Jonathan

Position: FAV

Jonathan Townes
The Andrew Goodman Foundation, *Student Ambassador*
Testimony for SB647
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Thursday, Feb. 20th, 2020
Election Law – Institutions of Higher Education – Voter Registration and Voting by Students
(Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Honorable Chair Paul Pinsky and esteemed members of the Committee:

My Name is Jonathan Townes. I am a Junior at Towson University studying Political Science. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Senator Lam for introducing this bill, I believe it has the potential to change the lives and experience of many students in Maryland higher education. I have the privilege of serving as a Student Ambassador for the Andrew Goodman Foundations VoteEverywhere initiative. As an AGF Ambassador, It has been my duty to promote civic engagement and social responsibility at Towson University. Towson’s AGF team, myself, and our many allies have worked tirelessly to increase voter participation and registration amongst the student body at Towson University.

According to Towson University’s National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, the number of TU students participating in the midterm election nearly doubled from 20.7% in 2014 to 42.2% in 2018. We have also seen incredible voter registration rates, with 85.6% of all Towson University Students being registered to vote in the 2018 midterm election. The civic engagement success we have experienced at TU did not happen overnight. It is the culmination of many years of hard work, dedication, and compromise. It has not been easy. Overcoming the barriers that prevent students from participating in our electoral process has been something we at Towson University and others at different institutions have struggled with.

Before the passage of legislation in our Student Government Association, there were no policies written pertaining to excused absences for election day. Students were in effect being punished for exercising their constitutional right as citizens of the United States. We saw this as unacceptable. That is why we have worked tirelessly to pass legislation in our SGA that would remove that obstacle and designate election day as a campus holiday. This bill passed unanimously within our SGA, showing that we at Towson take our constitutional rights very seriously.

Before attending Towson, I grew up in the concrete jungles of Baltimore City. Since I was young, my parents taught me the importance of being involved in my community. They told stories of the many people who have fought and died for the rights that I am fighting for today. This is one of the many reasons why I became interested in becoming an Andrew Goodman Foundation Ambassador. This bill is very important because we live in a time where voting rights are not being expanded, rather they are being curtailed. I believe it is important that we take every step necessary to increase voter participation. The easiest way to do that is by making voter registration and civic engagement as simple and accessible as possible.

Voting serves as a building block to a more active civic life. Numerous studies have illustrated that voting is habit-forming, and young people who vote are more likely to become life-long voters. Universities serve to prepare us for life in the real world and as such, It is vital

for the survival of our republic that we have as many individuals informed and participating in the electoral process as possible.

Our state should take this opportunity to step up and be a national leader on the defense of our democracy. We now have to opportunity to make voting easier for all university students in Maryland. This is something that cannot wait another second.

For all these reasons, we support SB647 and urge a favorable report.

Thank You,

Jonathan Townes
Student Ambassador, The Andrew Goodman Foundation

Watson_FAV_SB0647

Uploaded by: Watson, Patricia

Position: FAV



Nykidra “Nyki” Robinson, Founder & CEO
nrobinson@blackgirlsvote.com
Black Girls Vote, Inc.

Testimony for SB0647

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Thursday, February 20, 2020

**Election Law - Institutions of Higher Education - Voter Registration and Voting by
Students**

(Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)

Position: Favorable

My name is Patricia Watson. I hold the position of Outreach Lead for Black Girls Vote, Inc. (BGV), a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization committed to engaging, educating, and empowering women to activate their voice by using their vote. I would like to thank the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to share why this issue is important to me. I also extend a special thank you to Senator Lam for introducing the bill and being a consistent advocate for Maryland democracy.

I am a strong believer in using the electoral process to improve the quality of life for my family and the collective community. Therefore, I urge the Senate to vote in favor of SB0647, the Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020 (SVEA). We must do more to improve youth voter participation; this bill does exactly that. With registered voters under the age of 29 representing an increasing portion of the American electorate, the SVEA targets this demographic. The SVEA ensures that students have the resources and information necessary to register to vote and is designed to increase voter participation and turnout among students.

Maryland is home to many world class institutions of higher education and it is important that students on these campuses are able to easily engage in the democratic process. In my capacity as Outreach Lead for BGV, we aim to register as many students as possible to vote. It is for this reason that BGV currently has three collegiate chapters housed on the campuses of Morgan State University, American University, and North Carolina A&T State University.

Throughout the year, we host voter registration “pop-ups”, information panels, and fundraisers. Most notably, in September 2019, we partnered with the late Congressman Cummings to host “Women in Politics” at the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Convention.



Nykidra “Nyki” Robinson, Founder & CEO
nrobinson@blackgirlsvote.com
Black Girls Vote, Inc.

Additionally, our annual Black Girls Vote Ball highlights the importance of voting while honoring political trailblazers that are committed to enhancing the voice of the people.

The SVEA would assist our efforts by providing student voter education, organizational support, and transportation. These increased resources will allow students to become more aware of the issues and policies that affect them directly, while establishing a habit of voting early on. Additionally, the SVEA offers a convenient and safer option to those commuting to the polls.

Although voting is voluntary, its importance and accessibility cannot be overshadowed. It is our civic duty. Respectfully, I urge all committee members to please vote in favor of SB0647. Thank you for your time and consideration.

JHU_M Clapsaddle_FWA_SB0647

Uploaded by: Clapsaddle, Mary

Position: FWA

SB 647
Support with
Amendment

TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Mary Clapsaddle
Director, State Affairs

DATE: February 20, 2020

On behalf of Johns Hopkins University President Ronald J. Daniels, I offer this testimony in support of **SB 647 – Election Law – Institutions of Higher Education – Voter Registration and Voting By Students (Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)**, with amendments.

Johns Hopkins University has made a commitment to increase voter registration and engagement rates. Building on the work of the 2018 "Hopkins Votes" initiative, the University's Center for Social Concern is working to convene university-wide collaborations to increase non-partisan voter registration among students and support every student in casting their ballot in future elections.

This initiative remains focused on voter access, regardless of political affiliation, location or voting method, or registration status. The effort began in 2018 and supported a 30 percentage point increase in the student voting rates from the 2014 mid-term election cycle.

The mission of Johns Hopkins University is to educate its students and cultivate their capacity for life-long learning, to foster independent and original research, and to bring the benefits of discovery to the world. Hopkins Votes manifests that purpose by preparing students for life-long learning through their civic engagement. Being part of the political process is imperative for all members of a community, regardless of which community they call home. Hopkins Votes hopes to encourage students to explore both national and local politics – as both are imperative for strengthening our democracy and shedding light on the issues most important to oneself.

This bill would further the goals of Hopkins Votes by ensuring that voter registration and election information is readily available to students and by physically bringing polling locations to our students.

I would note that, along with our colleagues at MICUA, we would support several clarifying amendments: limiting the requirement to establish a polling place on campus to those institutions with an *undergraduate* population of more than 4,500; specifying that a polling place will be on the *primary campus* of an institution (i.e., the JHU Homewood campus); that we will implement *additional outreach efforts* if our website links do not generate

sufficient clicks; and clarifying that while the closing of a polling location is at the discretion of the local board of election, a polling place established in accordance with this bill ***may not be the sole reason*** for the closure of a nearby polling place. This last provision is critical to us as a member of the central Baltimore civic community. Existing locations, such as the Waverly Library and Barclay Elementary School, are long-standing polling places that are relied upon by many members of the community beyond the boundaries of Johns Hopkins. Given that the changes to polling locations that this bill requires would take effect with the 2022 election cycle – after the upcoming Census, reapportionment, and redistricting – I trust that we will have ample time work with the Baltimore City Board of Elections to ensure that one community doesn't receive a more convenient polling location at the expense of another.

With those caveats and clarifications, Johns Hopkins urges a **favorable committee report on SB 647**.

cc: Members, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Senator Clarence K. Lam

MICUA_Fidler_FWA_SB0647

Uploaded by: Fidler, Sara

Position: FWA

Maryland Independent College
and University Association

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**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Committee**

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

Sara Fidler, President, sfidler@micua.org

MEMBERS

February 20, 2020

Capitol Technology University

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Ner Israel Rabbinical College

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Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony to support with amendments **Senate Bill 647 Election Law – Institutions of Higher Education – Voter Registration and Voting by Students (Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)**. MICUA member institutions serve almost 66,000 students in 180 locations throughout the State, and we are proud to be able to offer over 1,600 programs to our students. We support and encourage civic activity on campuses and launch “Get Out the Vote” efforts for every election. In 2019, several of our institutions participated in the ALL IN Challenge which seeks to increase student democratic engagement. Several of our institutions reported student voter participation rates of 40% or higher. Of note, Maryland Institute College of Art has one of the highest student voter participation rates in the country!

In addition to other requirements, SB 647 requires private nonprofit institutions of higher education to provide a link to the online voter registration system operated by the State Board of Elections in a location where it may be easily viewed by students registering for course work. If there are fewer than 15 clicks on the link, the institution must report to MICUA, and in turn, MICUA must report to specified committees of the General Assembly, regarding efforts to relocate the link; a description of the steps the institution is taking to encourage students to use the link; and efforts to improve access to voter registration for students at the institution.

Our **first set of amendments** addresses the reporting requirements of the bill. We clarify that MICUA will only collect reports from member institutions, not from all private nonprofit institutions in the State. This amendment also alters the reporting requirement so that only the number of clicks must be reported, not whether the clicks were made by students who are residents of Maryland. The provisions of the bill, as drafted, would be very difficult to track and may present privacy concerns. This amendment also alters the report such that it no longer requires a screen shot of the link before and after it is relocated in the event that there have been fewer than 15 clicks. We are committed to making the portal useful to students;

however, we feel that details regarding the location of the link on our webpages, the size or color of the font, or other aesthetics relating to the portal may become administratively burdensome.

The bill also requires a private nonprofit institution of higher education that awards baccalaureate degrees, enrolls 4,500 or more students, and provides on-campus housing to have a separate precinct on the campus of the institution. As drafted, this would apply to two MICUA member institutions: Johns Hopkins University and Loyola University Maryland.

Our **second set of amendments** makes changes to these requirements in order to remove Loyola University Maryland. By limiting the number of students to be 4,500 or more *undergraduate* students, only Johns Hopkins University will be included. Issues of parking availability, campus security, accessibility for individuals with disabilities, and other logistics can present grave challenges for some of our urban campuses. This amendment also specifies that a local board of elections may not use the requirement to establish a separate precinct on campus as the *sole basis* for closing a precinct located near, but off-campus.

Voting is the cornerstone of a strong democracy and there is a strong educational and civic component to the process that all MICUA members support. MICUA thanks the sponsor and the committee for considering the attached amendments as this legislation is debated.

AMENDMENTS TO SB 647 BY MICUA

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in lines 22, 23, and 30, in each instance, after “private” insert “nonprofit”; and in line 30, after “requiring” insert “certain”.

On page 2, in line 4, after “private” insert “nonprofit”; in line 6, after “the” insert “primary”; and in line 8, after “campus;” insert “prohibiting a local board from using a certain requirement as the sole basis for closing a certain precinct;”.

On page 7, in line 20, after “PRIVATE” insert “NONPROFIT”.

On page 8, in line 28, after “PRIVATE” insert “NONPROFIT”; in line 30, after “STATE” insert “AND IS A MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION”.

On pages 8 and 9, strike beginning with “STUDENTS” in line 32 on page 8 down through “STUDENTS” in line 1 on page 9 and substitute “PEOPLE”.

On page 9, strike beginning with the colon in line 5 down through “C.” in line 10; in line 12, after “PRIVATE” insert “NONPROFIT”; and strike beginning with “PRIVATE” in line 16 down through “EDUCATION” in line 17 and substitute “ITS MEMBERS”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 10, in lines 2, 23, and 29, in each instance, after “PRIVATE” insert “NONPROFIT”; in line 26, after “MORE” insert “UNDERGRADUATE”; in line 29, after “THE” insert “PRIMARY”; after line 31, insert:

“(III) A LOCAL BOARD MAY NOT USE THE REQUIREMENTS OF SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS PARAGRAPH AS THE SOLE BASIS FOR CLOSING A PRECINCT NEAR THE CAMPUS.”;

and in line 32, strike “(III)” and substitute “(IV)”.

SMCM_Jordan_FWA_SB0647

Uploaded by: Jordan, Tuajuanda

Position: FWA

Senate Bill 647

**Election Law - Institutions of Higher Education - Voter Registration and Voting by
Students**

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 20th, 2020

Support with Amendment

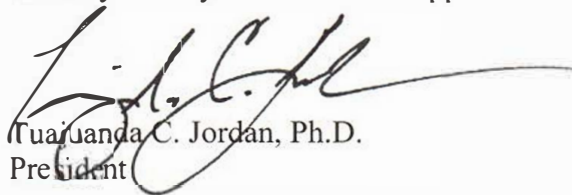
Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on Senate Bill 647. This Bill establishes requirements related to voting by students at higher education institutions, as well as student voter registration. St. Mary's College of Maryland has long supported civic engagement, including student's voter registration. St. Mary's College believes Senate Bill 647 will supplement our current efforts.

St. Mary's College seeks an amendment. On Page 7, lines 2-3, delete "(V) A POLICY ALLOWING STUDENTS TO BE EXCUSED FROM CLASS TO VOTE..." Early and absentee voting is widely accessible to students. Excusing students from class will add pressure to the academic calendar, which is already constrained.

For this reason, St. Mary's College supports Senate Bill 647 with this amendment.

Thank you for your continued support of St. Mary's College of Maryland.



Tuajuanda C. Jordan, Ph.D.
President



The
**NATIONAL
PUBLIC
HONORS**
College



MACC_ByranNewton__FWA_SB0647

Uploaded by: Newton, Bryan

Position: FWA



Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

**Testimony on behalf of The Maryland Association of Community Colleges and
the Maryland Community College Chief Student Affairs Officers**

Submitted by

**Dr. Bryan Newton, Vice President for Enrollment Management & Student Services,
Wor-Wic Community College**

February 20, 2020

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

Position: Favorable Testimony with Amendments

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 647, the Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020. All sixteen Maryland community colleges are committed to engaging students in civic participation and making them aware of their right to vote. The Maryland Association of Community Colleges and the Community College Chief Student Affairs Officers are supportive of this legislation with amendments to ensure that we can practically implement the legislation while preserving academic requirements required by college and program accreditors.

We recognize that participation in our elections continues to be challenging. In the 2018 general election only 59.06% of eligible voters in Maryland cast ballots, and in our last presidential election only half of young adults ages 18-29 nationwide voted. The number of people engaged in our elections continues to stagnate even as the process of voting becomes easier in many jurisdictions. Maryland's community colleges understand that we have a responsibility to educate students about their civic duties and that we must encourage students to take the time to vote.

Each of our sixteen community colleges already engage in substantial efforts to make students aware of their right to vote, and our student activities offices work with student clubs and organizations to host voter registration drives and implement initiatives to increase awareness of the importance of voting. At my college, Wor-Wic Community College, our Director of Student Engagement collaborates with the local Board of Elections to host voter registration drives throughout the year and we facilitate student club and organization initiatives to increase engagement in civic activities. In the months before federal, state and local elections our Director of Student Engagement regularly reminds students of voter registration deadlines, early voting locations and the hours for voting on election day. This legislation mandates these types of activities and requires colleges to report on our efforts.

While we are supportive of the need to empower students to vote, our first commitment is to uphold academic standards and to ensure that we meet national and state accreditor requirements. SB 647 requires a student voting plan that includes a policy allowing students to be excused from class to vote. This is problematic for community colleges that require a minimum number of instructional minutes and that have many students, particularly in allied health programs, participating in required clinical rotations at local employers. Missing critical class time impacts the learning environment, and in the case of clinical rotations, may be contrary to employer policies.

Further, unlike our four-year partners where most students live on campus, community college students often travel significant distances from their homes to attend classes and their polling locations are far from campus. For example, Wor-Wic Community College serves three counties on the Lower Eastern Shore and transportation from rural areas is often challenging. It can take a Wor-Wic student several hours to travel to campus from locations such as Pocomoke or Crisfield using existing public transportation. Excusing a student from class to vote will result in some students missing several required classes as they travel to and from distant polling places.

Given the accessibility of early voting and absentee voting in Maryland it makes sense to steer students toward these alternatives instead of negatively impacting the classroom with unnecessary absences. SB 647 already requires a student voting plan to include plans for dissemination of information about the process and deadlines for requesting and returning a ballot by mail, as well as the locations and dates for early voting. These efforts will give students every opportunity to vote without missing critical class or clinical time. We would ask that SB 647 be amended as follows:

AMENDMENT 1

On page 7, beginning with line 2 delete the words A POLICY ALLOWING STUDENTS TO BE EXCUSED FROM CLASS TO VOTE

Community colleges are known as democracy's colleges for our uniquely American commitment to provide universal access to postsecondary education. As part of our mission we prepare students for economic prosperity and to become active participants in their communities. Voter registration and participation by our students is important and will be strengthened by the requirements of SB 647.

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges and the Maryland Chief Student Affairs Officers recommend a favorable report on this bill with the proposed amendment, and we thank you for your consideration.