



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

HB 292 Toll Roads, Highways, and Bridges, County Government Consent Requirement - Expansion

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) supports HB 292 Toll Roads, Highways, and Bridges – Local Government Consent Requirement – Expansion, just as it supported the similar bill in 2019. LWVMD supports action that promotes an equitable fiscal structure for Maryland and relies on local government for guidance.

Every county in the state is unlike any other and good policies are a combination of state and local entities. Unique features of regions and counties may be better known by localities and the state provides a clear, important structure for good decisions to be made with the support of local government.

The map of Maryland brings greater understanding to how this bill impacts the state. Currently, consent of a majority of governments in nine affected counties is required to construct tolled infrastructure in the eastern part of the state where counties make up approximately 34 percent of the land and 8.5 percent of the state population. That means 91.5 percent of people residing in the rest of the state do not have this same authority.

Interagency coordination is essential to sound policies. Agencies may be on the local, regional or state level that provide added insight to making decisions. Cooperation helps promote adequate and appropriate actions to achieve mutual goals. Each decision in regard to tolling of transportation facilities has repercussions at various levels and each level of government may have specific information about that affected outcome.

This bill is one of expansion of current law. Some counties have powers that when viewed on the basis of equity, all counties would benefit from. The bill does not mandate each county have (or not have) toll roads or bridges. It simply states that local viewpoints must be valued in the decision-making process.

LWVMD urges your vote in support of HB 292 so all 23 counties may be treated equitably in regard to tolling infrastructure.