



## **TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

### **HB 197 Election Law - Qualification of Voters - Proof of Identity**

**POSITION: Oppose**

**BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents**

**Date: February 6, 2020**

The League of Women Voters was founded on the belief that voter participation is essential to a healthy democracy. Our organization has worked for 100 years to assure the right to vote of every citizen. We oppose efforts to create new barriers that block citizen participation and, accordingly, we oppose a requirement to present identification in order to vote.

Pursuant to the federal Help America Vote Act, Maryland requires a voter to provide a verifiable driver's license or the last four digits of a Social Security number at the time of voter registration. In the case of a voter unable to provide this information, other identification and proof of residency is required.

Imposing voter identification requirements beyond what is mandated by the Help America Vote Act will be burdensome even to voters with photo identification and to the election officials required to examine such documents. Further, photo identification requirements have been shown to disproportionately impact those who are least likely to have current government-issued photo identification: elderly and young voters, those living in rural areas distant from issuing offices, as well as low-income and minority voters.

There has been no substantial evidence of voter fraud through impersonation at polling places or voting by non-citizens in significant numbers. The lack of prosecutions for voter fraud is strong evidence that existing penalties are an effective deterrent.

We note that the bill attempts to relieve part of the cost of obtaining identification by waiving the fees that would ordinarily be required by the Motor Vehicle Administration. This overlooks the cost of providing the documents, such as a birth certificate or passport, that an applicant would be required to present in order to obtain photo identification.

The LWVMD representing 1,500 concerned citizens throughout Maryland, strongly urges an unfavorable report on HB 197 as it will be burdensome, provide no significant benefit to election integrity, and will have a discriminatory impact.