



## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

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### Ways and Means Committee

#### HB197: Election Law – Qualification of Voters – Proof of Identity

February 6, 2020

Position: Opposed

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is an independent, public policy organization that works to improve policies, programs and services that support people with developmental disabilities and their families in our communities. The DD Council is led by people with developmental disabilities and their families. From that perspective, the DD Council opposes HB 197 which may disenfranchise many eligible voters who do not have government issued photo identification.

- **Federal law guarantees the right to vote to a person with a developmental disability who understands what it means to vote, yet access remains a problem for voters with disabilities.** Voting is a fundamental right that Maryland’s citizens with disabilities want and need to participate in. HB 197 creates another barrier to access and infringes on a person’s right to vote.
- **People with developmental disabilities are the least likely to own a car and possess a driver’s license, which is the most common form of identification.** Maryland residents who do not drive and will be required to obtain some other form of identification in order to vote will face challenges obtaining the identification card.
- **Requiring a government issued photo identification card or other documentation creates an additional barrier to voting and is not needed to address any documented problem.** The reality is that there is no substantial evidence of widespread fraud by voters who actually come to the polls to vote. Federal laws such as the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 were enacted to make voting easier and increase voter participation.

**HB 197 creates a burden for people with developmental disabilities and creates an additional barrier to entire group of people to exercise their fundamental right to vote.** Therefore, the DD Council opposes.

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