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Ways and Means Committee
Education Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 881: Election Law- Voting by Absentee Ballot- Prepaid Postage for Return of Ballots

Hearing: February 18, 2020

Chairwoman Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

HB 881 requires that absentee ballot materials sent to a voter by mail include prepaid postage on the envelope provided for the return of the ballot as well as instructions for postage of the return envelope. The instructions must include (1) a statement that the return envelope includes prepaid postage and may be mailed as is, and (2) directions for how a voter may attach postage for the purpose of reducing the costs of the local board of elections.

More than 150,000 Maryland voters cast absentee ballots in 2018. Voters were instructed to place sufficient postage on their ballot in order for it to be delivered. Unfortunately, the price of stamps can be a burden on Maryland's most vulnerable residents who wish to vote. This bill continues and complements efforts in the current and past legislative sessions to expand voter access. Our democracy is strengthened by more full public participation. By removing postage as an obstacle to voting, more Maryland citizens will be able to more freely participate in our electoral system.

This year's fiscal note estimated an insignificant statewide cost of \$14,000 in FY22 (roughly .00003% of the State budget). This is a small price to pay in order to increase participation in our democracy.

I respectfully urge the Committee to vote favorably on HB881.

Sincerely,

Delegate Stephanie Smith