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**Subject:** Support for HB 1314

**To:** Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

**From:** Joel Zimba

**Contact:** Joel Zimba  
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**Date:** March 3, 2020

My name is Joel Zimba and I am asking you to support HB 1314, a bill to restore the secret ballot to disabled voters, such as me. I am tired of facing discrimination every time I go to vote.

For the past few election cycles, I voted at Margaret Brent Elementary School, 100 East 26 St. in Charles Village in Baltimore City. In the 2018 primary election, I was the only person in my precinct who used the ballot marking device (BMD). I lost the secrecy and privacy of my vote, since my ballot was easily identifiable during the recounts in Baltimore City. This is blatant discrimination. State and Federal voting laws specify that a vote must be secret.

On February 4, 2020, I voted in the Special Congressional District 7 Primary Election at my same assigned polling place. I arrived at my polling place at approximately 4:15 PM.

I am blind. I thus cannot hand mark a paper ballot. When I go to vote on election day, I need to use an accessible voting machine to mark my ballot privately and independently. I use the machine's audio interface and tactile controls to review and mark my ballot.

When I attempted to vote using the BMD at my precinct, the BMD was not reading my ballot aloud to me. The two poll workers at my polling place who assisted me could not independently determine why the ballot was not being read. After calling the technical support hotline for assistance, they learned that they had to select either the Democratic or Republican ballot before the ballot could be read aloud. Once they selected my ballot type, I was able to vote independently using the BMD.

I had to wait about a half hour while the poll workers attempted to figure out how to correctly configure the BMD for me.

It is obvious to me that, once again, very few voters used the BMD in my precinct.

Please vote in favor of HB 1314. I deserve the same right to a secret ballot and to cast my vote independently and privately as you have.