



TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

HB 1047 – Mail-In Voting Enhancement Act

POSITION: Favorable

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports voting by mail for Maryland elections. As the 2020 elections demonstrated, mail-in ballots are a popular and convenient option, and the number of Marylanders choosing to vote by mail in the future will almost certainly be higher than was historically the case. Now is the time to prepare for that increase.

HB 1047 would implement many of the best practices the LWV recommends for voting by mail, including the following:

Ballot drop boxes shall be equitably allocated, and their design and placement must be accessible — both physically and geographically — to as many voters as possible. Security will be maintained by 24/7 security camera monitoring and by establishing consistent statewide chain-of-custody procedures for transporting materials from the drop boxes to the local Board of Elections. Tampering with a ballot drop box would be a felony.

Ballot tracking will be enhanced, enabling voters to follow the progress of their mail-in ballot and learn when their ballot request application was received, when their ballot was sent out, when the local BOE received their returned ballot, and when/whether that ballot was accepted for processing. Voters appreciated having access to their ballot status information in 2020 and are eager for this feature to continue.

Multiple options will be offered for **ballot curing**, in which voters who failed to sign the oath will be contacted by the BOE to correct the problem in a timely manner before the end of the canvass. This means fewer people will be disenfranchised due to a careless error.

HB 1047 also requires the SBE to contract with a consultant to **improve the usability** of both online and mailed materials relating to mail-in voting. Creating plain-language instructions along with a consistent, efficient visual design scheme will reduce confusion, increase voter engagement, and potentially lead to significant savings on printing and postage.

(continued)

Mail-in voting was used extensively and for the most part successfully in the 2020 elections, but many of the procedures were implemented on an emergency basis only. HB 1047 builds on the lessons of 2020 and establishes a strong foundation for increased mail-in voting in future years. Its provisions will increase voter confidence, improve accessibility, and make our election system fairer.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 1047 by the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.