

GMOM_SB29test_020421.pdf

Uploaded by: Cooper, Charlie

Position: FAV



Get Money Out – Maryland

www.GetMoneyOutMD.org
www.facebook.com/GetMoneyOutMD
twitter.com/GetMoneyOutMD
Instagram.com/GetMoneyOutMaryland

Board of Directors

Charlie Cooper, President
Doug Miller, Vice President
Angad Singh, Treasurer
Joseph Adams, M.D.

Diamonte Brown
Renaud Brown
Tina Coplan
Hank Prensky

Sheila Ruth
Wylie Sawyer
Ashley Sparks
Martin Wulfe

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF SB 29 – ELECTION LAW – ELECTIONS BY MAIL,
POLLING PLACES AND EARLY VOTING CENTERS**

February 4, 2021

Get Money Out (GMOM) is an all-volunteer organization established eight years ago. We want all citizens to have equal access to the ballot and an equal say in governance. Through our grassroots actions, we have signed up over 9,000 supporters.

Under SB 29 every citizen who is registered to vote would be sent a vote-by-mail ballot. One of our key goals at GMOM is to increase access to voting. Currently, if a voter wants to vote-by-mail, they must apply to receive a ballot. This application process is an added hurdle that many citizens simply do not know how to apply and access. In turn, this hinders the ability of various groups to vote – particularly the elderly.

One needs to look no further than a comparison of the 2016 and 2020 election cycles to see the positive effects of increased access to mail-in-ballots. In 2016, voter turnout was about 60% whereas in 2020 it increased to 66%. This increase represents more than 20 million more people voting in this country. Maryland also saw an increase of about 71% to 74%. An increase in participation did not just come in the national election but also primary elections across numerous states. By looking at the data it is simple to conclude that vote-by-mail ballots increased national participation in the elections.

The pandemic was not the main reason people voted by mail. Pew Research found that 66 percent of people choose their method of voting by what they found to be most **convenient**. That almost triples the 24% who decided their method of voting because of concern for the virus. It is no surprise that what people want is the easiest possible way to vote. Thus, if Maryland would remove its required application to vote-by-mail it would provide more convenience to voters and would result in more access to voting for every citizen. The added cost should be very low because we already mail every voter a sample ballot.

We believe in decreasing barriers to vote for every citizen. Due to this, we ask for a favorable report on SB 29

SB 29 - Elections By Mail Polling Places EV Center

Uploaded by: Edwards, Donna

Position: FAV



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL AFL-CIO

7 School Street • Annapolis, Maryland 21401-2096

Office. (410) 269-1940 • Fax (410) 280-2956

President

Donna S. Edwards

Secretary-Treasurer

Gerald W. Jackson

**SB 29 – Election Law – Voting – Elections by Mail, Polling Places,
and Early Voting Centers
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 4, 2021**

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 29 – Election Law – Voting – Elections by Mail, Polling Places, and Early Voting Centers. My name is Donna S. Edwards, President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

If the COVID-19 Pandemic has taught us anything about our elections, it is that we know we can conduct them by mail. With limited time, resources, and planning, the Maryland Board of Elections, executed closely to what is being proposed in SB 29 during the Presidential Primary, albeit with some difficulties along the way. In the face of a global pandemic and needing to completely change our entire Primary election process in just a matter of months, The State Boards and County Boards processed 1,215,608 Vote-By-Mail ballots in the Presidential Preference Primary race. With proper planning and enabling legislation to do so, we know that we can run our elections in Maryland by mail – allowing for those who still desire to vote in person to do so – with enormous success, and we have the proof from last year.

SB 29 sets our election policy going forward, to provide a vote-by-mail ballot to every registered voter in Maryland. We need to change our election law to provide for universal vote-by-mail, while still providing in-person voting options for those voters who choose to do so.

Ultimately, Vote-By-Mail both expands the electorate, and it is cheaper. Oregon passed a Universal Vote by Mail law in 1998, and what have they seen as a result? A decreased cost to the taxpayers and increase in voter turnout. In 1998, Oregon saw a turnout of 59%, compared with their most recent turnout for 2020 – after Vote by Mail had been fully instituted – of 78%¹.

¹ Oregon Secretary of State's Office

Additionally, Oregon has realized a 30% savings on the cost of conducting elections due to adopting Universal Vote by Mail.

Increasing the number of Marylanders who participate in our Democracy while simultaneously saving Maryland taxpayers money is win-win legislation for everyone.

We ask for a favorable report on SB 29.

Support SB0029_Vote by Mail_Letterhead with crab.p

Uploaded by: Enagonio, Liz

Position: FAV



Indivisible: Central Maryland

Susan Radke, Advocate

Dsusan56@gmail.com

Liz Enagonio, Advocate

lenagonio@icloud.com

Lois Einolf, Advocate

leinolf@yahoo.com

Meena Sahu, Advocate

emsahu@gmail.com

SB 029_ Election Law – Voting – Elections by Mail, Polling Places, and Early Voting Centers. Indivisible Central Maryland_Enagonio Liz_SUPPORT .

Indivisible Central Maryland SUPPORTS SB0029, We believe that voting is a right and a responsibility of citizenship. We support every effort to enfranchise all citizens eligible to vote by making it as easy as possible to cast a ballot in every election. We believe that no-excuses vote by mail is a valuable tool for enfranchising Maryland voters.

According to Tom Ridge, who served as the Homeland Security secretary under George W. Bush and now chairs the bipartisan group VoteSafe, "The June 2 [2020] primaries proved what we already knew – access to absentee ballots increases voter turnout. That's especially good news for someone like me who does not believe voting is a privilege, but rather a responsibility of citizenship. Voters should have options to demonstrate that responsibility safely and securely during this pandemic." (The Hill)

A report called [America Goes To The Polls 2018](#) from the nonprofit *Vote and the U.S. Elections Project*, found the following:

- Three of the four Vote at Home States – Colorado, Oregon, and Washington – ranked in the top 10 in turnout. These states send all registered voters their ballot two or more weeks in advance and provide secure and convenient options to return it.
- Utah, the fourth and newest state to implement Vote at Home statewide, led the nation in voter turnout growth over 2014.
- In the 2018 primaries, turnout in vote at home states outperformed states with traditional poll-based voting by 15.5 percentage points.

We especially support the provision in SB that will require Maryland to mail a ballot to every registered voter. In the 2020 Primary, not all states saw an increase in turnout. Indiana, which allowed anyone to vote by mail but did not mail applications to every voter, saw a dip in turnout. Turnout in Washington D.C., which also did not mail applications to every voter and struggled to get absentee ballots out in time, only saw a 1% increase in turnout.

For safety, reliability and ease of access to the vote in all elections large or small, we are requesting the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee to vote to **SUPPORT SB0029**.

Liz Enagonio, advocate, on behalf of Indivisible Central Maryland

lenagonio@icloud.com

301-351-6451

SB0029 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Jenkins , Courtney

Position: FAV

Education, Health & Environmental Affairs
SB0029 Election Law- Voting- Elections By Mail, Polling Places, and Early Voting Centers
February 4, 2021
Support

Dear Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Members,

On behalf of the approximately 1,400 members of the Baltimore Francis “Stu” Filbey Area Local #181 of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO (APWU BFSFAL #181) we write in support of SB0029, Election Law- Voting- Elections by Mail, Polling Places, and Early Voting Centers---- requiring each local elections board to send a vote by mail ballot to each registered voter in the state, under certain requirements and other regulations; while expanding access to the polls through early voting and ensure the proper amount of polling locations for voters across the state.

The members of APWU BFSFAL #181 are postal workers trained with the expertise and integrity of safely and efficiently handling political and election mail. The significance of that expertise and integrity on full display during the current public health crisis-- as thousands of postal workers processed millions of pieces of election mail for the primary and general elections of 2020. The past election cycle saw high voter turnout, with approximately 37% of eligible voters in Maryland requesting a ballot through the mail. Removing the requirement that eligible voters have to request an absentee ballot increases access to the ballot.

The United States Postal Service is rated as the most trusted government agency by the public and that is in large part due to the dedication of the workforce. Postal workers have been processing and delivering election mail for decades with many states in the country offering some form of vote by mail. Colorado, Hawaii, Utah, and Washington are states with all mail elections.

SB0029 guarantees expanded access to the ballot while allowing the USPS to provide vital and necessary services for generations to come. The impact of this bill on communities in Maryland would make voting more secure and accessible to millions of Marylanders that find it difficult to make time to participate in the electoral process. This is especially important for the elderly, young, working people, and those who live at or below the poverty line.

While our democracy was tested postal workers helped ensure the most fundamental right we have as citizens was protected and we welcome the opportunity to expand the services we provide by handling election ballots.

For these reasons APWU BFSFAL #181 supports SB0029.

Respectfully submitted,

Courtney L. Jenkins, APWU #181 Legislative Director

SB29 Elections by Mail_Testimony_League of Women V

Uploaded by: Kohn, Linda

Position: FWA



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SB 29—Election Law – Voting – Elections by Mail, Polling Places and Early Voting Centers

POSITION: Support With Amendments

BY: Lois Hybl & Richard Willson, Co-Presidents

DATE: February 4, 2021

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy. We support conducting elections by mail in which all registered voters automatically receive a ballot in the mail without having to request one in advance. We also believe that some level of in-person voting should be maintained for voters who need assistance, choose to register in-person or other reasons.

The League spent more than a year studying this issue and prepared a Fact Sheet (attached) that identifies several best practices. **We support SB 29 with amendments to reflect these best practices. Specifically:**

- The requirement to use a “return identification envelope” in order for the ballot to be counted presents a concern for voters who download and print their ballot at home.
- Although the bill requires signature verification on returned ballots, there is no provision for voters to remedy (“cure”) a missing or challenged signature. This practice is used in the states that conduct their elections predominantly by mail and should be employed here so as not to disenfranchise voters.
- There should be a means for signature privacy on the return envelope to help assure voters of the integrity of their ballot. In the 2020 General Election, an envelope flap was used; other options are also possible (e.g., an additional return envelope or a privacy sleeve).
- There should be an ample number of drop boxes and in-person polling places that are sufficient in number to facilitate convenient and safe access in both urban and non-urban areas, with access by public transportation.
- All elections, including those conducted predominantly by mail, require an accurate and up-to-date voter registration database.
- Voter education is critical for any shift of this magnitude in voting procedures, particularly if new procedures are used, such as ballot return requirements or signature verification.

The LWVMD, representing 1000+ concerned citizens throughout Maryland, urges a favorable report on SB 29 with amendments to reflect the best practices we identified above. Thank you for your consideration.

121 Cathedral Street, Suite 2B, Annapolis, MD 21401
410-269-0232 * info@lwvmd.org * www.lwvmd.org

FACT SHEET: VOTE BY MAIL (VBM) IN MARYLAND

INTRODUCTION & SCOPE

Should the Maryland League of Women Voters adopt a position on voting by mail as the statewide norm for all elections? The Montgomery County League recommended a study on vote by mail in June 2019, noting that Rockville planned to use this method in its November 2019 election. A study committee began work in the fall, but by spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had made the subject more pressing. At its June 2020 Council Meeting, the LWV of Maryland (LWVMD) determined that a state-wide study should be done instead and be completed in time to have a consensus position in place for the start of the Maryland legislative session in 2021. Although this fact sheet includes examples from recent elections, any consensus we may reach would potentially apply to Maryland's elections held after 2020.

DEFINITION OF VOTE BY MAIL (VBM)

In this fact sheet, when we use the term “vote by mail” we mean the method for conducting elections in which voters automatically receive a ballot in the mail without having to request one first, and in-person voting options are available but limited. In vote by mail elections, ballots are delivered to voters by mail weeks before Election Day, filled out at their convenience, and then returned by mail or other means.¹ In a VBM election, because *most* voters use the mail to cast their ballots, only a limited number of in-person voting centers are available on or before election day for voters who may need assistance, have a preference to vote in-person, seek to register on election day, or may not have received a ballot by mail. Even states that use “all” vote by mail make some in-person voting options available. Vote by mail contrasts with absentee voting, in which each voter must *request* an absentee ballot for each election and then return the completed ballot (usually by mail).² Typically, absentee voting has been used by a minority of voters, with most voters choosing to cast their ballots in person.³

BACKGROUND

VBM in Other States: VBM is the standard state-wide method of voting in four states. Oregon implemented VBM state-wide in 2000, Washington in 2011, Colorado in 2014. Hawaii used the method statewide for the first time in 2020. Utah introduced VBM in 2013 and rolled it out by county, with statewide implementation in 2020.

Turnout: VBM can play a part in increasing voter turnout. Although states with established VBM often report much higher turnout than other states, a 2020 study produced by the Stanford University Democracy & Polarization Lab suggests that, on average, turnout runs about 2-3 percent higher (analyzing multiple types of elections and over time).⁴ However, in any particular election, VBM turnout is affected by the same factors that affect turnout for in-person voting: whether it's a presidential or mid-year election, if there are high profile contests or issues, or if the ballot includes controversial initiatives. Demographic factors, such as age or racial and ethnic makeup of the voting population, regional variations like population density or location of polls or vote centers, and comfort with USPS can all affect voter participation. In Maryland, when Rockville used vote-by-mail for the first time in its 2019 Mayoral election, turnout almost doubled from about 16% in 2015 to about 31% in 2019.⁵ In contrast, in

Maryland's 2020 Primary Election, using VBM for the first time in a statewide contest, voter turnout was about the same as in the 2016 primary election at just over 40%.⁶

Effects of VBM on Different Populations: While VBM may offer advantages to some population groups, others may need special attention. For example, VBM can be helpful for senior citizens or voters living in rural or remote areas who may find it difficult to travel to vote. However, it can be a disadvantage for populations that move more frequently, such as people who are young or poor.⁷ Implementation of VBM also requires attention to the needs of frequently disenfranchised voters. Some, like homeless people or residents of Native American reservations, may not have acceptable mailing addresses on file in state databases; others, like people incarcerated for a misdemeanor or failure to post bail,⁸ may not have access to information about voting; still others with disabilities may need special tools to fill out their ballots. Voters who have only a post office box as their official address (for both residential and mailing purposes) should be informed on how to register, request a ballot and what to do if a ballot is not received in adequate time before an election.⁹ Requesting or downloading a ballot online requires internet access and a printer, which are not available to all voters. Such voters need to have options other than VBM available to them.

Partisan Advantages: There is no evidence that VBM favors one party or another. Looking at elections in 3 states, from 1996 to 2018, researchers found that VBM did not affect either party's turnout or share of the vote.¹⁰ Dominance by one party is more likely to reflect the patterns of power within a state, such as design of district maps or use of plurality or majority election systems.¹¹ A survey done in 2003, three years after Oregon implemented VBM, by Dr. Priscilla Southwell, a professor of Political Science at the University of Oregon, found that 81% of respondents favored the vote-by-mail system while 19% favored traditional voting at a polling place. The poll also shows high favorability among both registered Democrats (85%) and Republicans (76%). About thirty percent of respondents said they had voted more often after vote-by-mail was implemented, and 48% of voters who identified as disabled or unable to work reported voting more often after VBM.¹²

MARYLAND LAW REGARDING VOTE BY MAIL

Maryland election rules currently permit conducting elections by mail under limited circumstances: for special elections that are not held at the same time as a regularly scheduled primary or general election, for local special elections approved by the relevant County Council or a Board of Commissioners, and certain other situations.¹³ The Governor may also proclaim a special election using vote by mail to fill a vacancy in an Office of Representative in Congress.

Because a state of emergency and a catastrophic public health emergency existed in Maryland, Governor Hogan issued a proclamation on April 10, 2020, directing that the special election in District 7 to fill the remainder of the term of Congressman Elijah Cummings be conducted "solely" using VBM (this was held on April 28). He also directed that the 2020 Presidential Primary Election (held on June 2) would be conducted using VBM with limited in-person voting. This was less than 6 weeks before ballots had to start being mailed and the first time the method would be used statewide.

PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING VOTE BY MAIL

Implementing VBM represents an enormous undertaking that affects State and local Boards of Elections, voters, and candidates running for office. Every step in the voting process is affected, including procedures that take place before an election, during the election and after an election.

Before the election

Steps must be taken to ensure the accuracy of the voter lists, to establish contracts with vendors to print secure ballots, and to support the timely delivery of ballots to voters.

Accuracy of Voter Lists

Accurate and up-to-date voter rolls are essential for the successful implementation of VBM. Inaccurate or incomplete voter lists can result in people getting a ballot too late or not at all. In Maryland, the official voter registration list is established by the State, is coordinated with other state databases, and is accessed electronically by local boards.

Responsibility for updating voter information ultimately rests with individual voters. In Maryland, the rules and processes used for absentee voting and for special elections done by mail include requirements for updating registration information.¹⁴ In traditional absentee voting, the voter must complete a ballot *application form* that requires the voter's name, address and signature.¹⁵ Completion of the application ensures updated voter information for the 6-8%¹⁶ of voters who typically rely on absentee voting in an election. In VBM special elections, the local board mails a non-forwardable *ballot* to each voter on the State registration list, using the voter information on record.¹⁷ While communication campaigns may ask voters to voluntarily check and update their voter information, not all voters comply. The State Board of Elections may remove a voter from the registration lists in certain circumstances.¹⁸ Reliable connections with the Department of Motor Vehicles can also help update voter lists.

Examples of practices that have been used to update voter lists include:

- (1) *Extensive voter education campaigns*: these should start months before any ballot is mailed. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission recommends that education campaigns include guidance for voters on topics such as how to update voter information, how to get and return a ballot, how to complete a ballot, how to correct a mistake, deadlines, how to know if a ballot was accepted, and how to get help completing a ballot.
- (2) *Multiple mailings (postcards) before sending a ballot*: the mailings that are returned as undeliverable can be checked (e.g., did the voter move or die).¹⁹ In Rockville's 2019 election, the Board of Supervisors of Election (BSE) sent several mailings before sending the actual ballot. For its election, 2,319 (5.86%) were returned as undeliverable. In Maryland's June 2 primary, there was not enough time to directly mail an alert to all voters, but the state communications campaign told voters to check and update their voter information; almost 160,000 (4.4%) ballots were returned as undeliverable.²⁰
- (3) *Absentee applications sent instead of a ballot*: sending absentee applications requires voters to confirm or update their address or other information. However, it inserts an

extra step for the voter, and the two mailings (the application and the ballot) increase the labor demands on and expenses incurred by Boards of Elections.

Vendor Contracts

Vendors are used by many Boards of Elections to reduce the number of extra staff that must be hired to meet the increased workload created by elections and which must get done quickly. Vendors support ballot printing and mailing, support the voting equipment (e.g., scanners), support databases for voter lists, and help build election websites. In Maryland, the State Board of Elections provides the vendor with templates for all of the ballot inserts, the mailing schedule and voter data. The vendor prints, inserts, and mails the ballot packets.²¹ During Maryland's 2020 primary, concerns arose with the vendor responsible for printing and getting ballots to the postal service. However, there are few certified vendors in the country who are able to satisfy the requirements for printing secure ballots and envelopes.²² The State Board of Elections acknowledged the need for greater accountability over vendors. Greater transparency can also help the public understand which vendors are used and their experience.

Mailing Ballots

The actual ballots must be mailed early enough to give voters sufficient time to mark their ballots and return them by the deadline. Voters should also have sufficient time to notify the Board of Elections if a ballot was not received or the voter made a mistake and needs a replacement. In Oregon, for example, voters must be registered 21 days before an election, and ballots are mailed shortly after that. This allows time for notification of the Board of Elections if a ballot has not been received. In Colorado, ballots are mailed at least 18 days before an election.²³ In some states, the voter puts the ballot into an "extra" privacy envelope or sleeve that is then inserted into a mailing envelope. Maryland allows local boards to do this but does not require it.²⁴

During the Voting Period

During the voting period, procedures needed to ensure the smooth running of the election include ballot tracking by the Board of Election, voter options for returning a ballot and when they are due, and checking on the status of a submitted ballot.

Board of Elections Mail Tracking

The ability to track mailed ballots relies on the use of the postal service's "intelligent mail barcodes," which allows the election office to track ballots in the mail process, from drop-off to delivery to processing at the local board.²⁵ Each ballot has a unique barcode, which inhibits unauthorized duplication.²⁶ If a voter thinks a ballot was taken from their mailbox and requests another, the original barcode and ballot can be invalidated. Use of intelligent mail barcodes is a best practice recommended by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. According to the State Board of Elections report on the June 2, 2020 primary, Maryland uses this application.

Options for Returning A Ballot

In VBM, voters usually have three ways of returning their ballot:

- 1) *By mail*: some states pay for the return postage, but in others, the voter must pay for it. In Maryland, ballots have been sent with postage-paid return envelopes.
- 2) *Drop box*: all VBM states provide drop boxes as an alternative to the U.S. mail. Drop boxes are monitored by security cameras set up for the election, or in locations that already have security cameras (such as schools). They should be located in areas where voters feel safe, especially during non-business hours (this was a concern identified by some voters in Maryland’s 2020 primary election). Also, drop boxes should be accessible to voters who walk to them or use public transportation. Finally, drop boxes should be set up in as many locations as needed to make them convenient and easy to find. According to the Survey of the Performance of American Elections at Harvard University in 2016, 73 percent of voters in Colorado, 59 percent in Oregon, and 65 percent in Washington returned their ballots to some physical location, such as a drop box or local election office.²⁷ In the 2020 Maryland primary, procedures were established for retrieving ballots from drop boxes, including that the person picking up ballots must be sworn in and display a state or county ID and that law enforcement be notified of the box’s location; ballots were retrieved three times per day.²⁸ For the primary, 13% of voters returned their ballot by drop box, ranging from a low of 6% in Worcester and Baltimore Counties to a high of 44% in Kent County.²⁹
- 3) *In-person voting center*: all states that currently use VBM have a minimum number of in-person voting locations for voters who are unable to fill out a paper ballot, need assistance completing a ballot, have no permanent address, prefer to vote in person, or want to register to vote (same day registration). In VBM, the number of in-person voting sites is limited, perhaps to only one per county. Colorado bases the number of in-person voting centers on population, similar to Maryland’s approach for determining the number of voting centers for in-person early voting.³⁰ VBM states may not have a time that is called “early voting” but may still have a voting period in which in-person centers are open for some days before Election Day. In some states, voters may return a ballot to any vote center or drop box in the state. For example, in Oregon, if a local board receives a ballot from a voter in another part of the state, it records the receipt of the ballot in the state’s database and then sends the ballot to the appropriate local board for tabulation. This verifies timely receipt of the ballot and also ensures that a voter cannot try to cast another ballot at another voting center.

When Ballots Are Due

In some states, ballots must be *received* by the close of in-person voting centers on election day. In other states—including Maryland—ballots must be *postmarked* by election day. When the deadline relies on a postmark, ballots may continue to arrive at the Board of Elections after Election day, which can extend the time for counting the ballots. Voters need to have clear information on when ballots are due in order for their vote to be counted and understand that dropping a ballot into a corner mailbox on election day may not ensure a timely postmark. In Maryland, a late postmark is the most common reason for not counting a ballot.³¹

Ability of Voters to Check on the Status of a Returned Ballot

Voters using VBM often want to verify that their ballot was received and counted. A verification system also helps contribute to security. In Maryland's 2020 primary election, voters were able to check online for the status of their ballots by going to the Voter Search page on the State Board of Elections website, which can be found at <https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/VoterSearch>.

After the Election

Specific procedures that occur after the voting period include checking and tabulating the ballots and releasing results. Counting the ballots is also known as canvassing. The word "canvassing" can have two meanings. For many people, it describes people going door to door promoting a candidate, an issue, or collecting polling data. However, in Maryland (and elsewhere), canvassing refers to the process of counting and recording votes.³²

Checking Returned Ballots for Timeliness and Signature Before Counting

In Maryland, mailed-in ballots are checked for two things before being counted. First, ballots are checked for timeliness. This means that the postmark must show that the ballot was mailed on time. Second, mailed-in ballots are checked to ensure the voter has signed the oath on the outside of the ballot return envelope and that the envelope is sealed.³³ However, Maryland does not require signature verification, the most common method used to verify that a ballot is coming from the intended voter.³⁴ This involves comparing the voter's signature on the outside of the ballot return envelope to one on file with the Board of Elections. According to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, this may be done manually using a hand-held scanner, but as more ballots are mailed in, automated technology that captures the voter's signature on the ballot return envelope can process signatures more quickly. Typically, voters are notified by mail with instructions on how to correct a questionable signature (email and/or telephone may also be used). The voter mails back a signed form to correct the problem; a copy of valid identification may also be required.³⁵ When the form is received, trained workers compare it to the signature on the returned ballot envelope and determine whether to accept the ballot for counting. The signature on the returned form becomes the signature on file for future elections. In California, which has been transitioning to VBM, some counties ask voters to return multiple versions of their signature to keep on file.³⁶

All five VBM states use signature verification and provide an opportunity for voters to correct a questionable signature.³⁷ For example, in Utah, voters are notified within 1-2 business days if a signature is rejected before election day (or within 7 days if the rejection occurs on or after election day) and have to correct it by 5:00 p.m. the day before official results are certified. In Colorado, voters are notified within 3 days (2 days if the rejection is after election day) and have up to 8 days after election day to correct it.

Questions about the accuracy of signature verification and the possibility of mistaken rejection of ballots have led some to view signature verification as a form of voter suppression. Signatures can change over time for various reasons, including age (young people's signatures particularly change), illness or disability. Ballot rejection in some states in the 2018 election

disproportionately affected people with disabilities and minorities.³⁸ Privacy and trust issues also arise if signature verification is done on an unsealed ballot envelope. While allowing voters to cure a rejected ballot, it also creates an extra step that some voters have to take to cast their ballot. This can create confusion and delay, especially if the voter's native language is not English.

Verified Voting, a nonpartisan group focused on election technology, notes that signature verification is the "best currently-available means to detect ballots cast under a false identity" but automated software cannot be relied upon as the sole means to reject ballots.³⁹ The U.S. Election Assistance Commission recommends using a multi-leveled process to review signatures so that no ballot can be rejected based on a single review or without in-person inspection. Maryland does not conduct a signature verification process for voters, regardless of whether someone votes by mail or in person. If Maryland chooses to require signature verification, there will be cost for software, for training personnel to use it and for voter education.

Tabulating Votes

In a VBM system, although there is no official "early voting period," voters can mail in completed ballots as soon as they have been received. In many states, canvassers begin recording ballots as soon as they come in; in other states, ballots may not be opened before election day. In Maryland, election code directs that canvassing of absentee ballots may not begin until the Wednesday after election day and for special elections, canvassing may begin on election day.⁴⁰ However, for the special and primary elections in 2020, Gov. Hogan directed that counting could begin 12 days before election day.

During counting, some ballots may be rejected. According to the report of the Maryland State Board of Elections, 2.39 percent of mailed ballots were rejected in the June 2020 primary. The two most common reasons for rejection are ballots submitted after the mailing deadline or missing signatures (for the oath on the outside of the envelope). Best practices include systems for contacting voters and allowing them to correct an error such as a missing signature. Voter education could include the reasons that ballots are rejected and how to avoid them.

Releasing Results

Canvassing typically takes longer in a VBM election than in conventional in-person elections. Checking each submitted ballot takes longer than checking only the small percentage of absentee ballots typically submitted. In addition, when the mailing deadline is based on a postmark, ballots may continue to arrive after election day. Preliminary results may be released on election day, with final results coming later after all ballots have been counted. Results for Maryland's June 2, 2020 primary were certified on July 2, 2020.⁴¹ Voters need to understand that final results may be delayed and may change from preliminary results. Best practices include releasing results by precinct since this provides another security check (e.g., were the votes counted approximately equal to the number of qualified voters?).

OTHER ISSUES IN IMPLEMENTING VBM

Two other general issues arise in implementing VBM. One relates to costs and another to security.

Costs

VBM shifts the costs required to conduct elections. In a mostly in-person election, significant costs are incurred for hiring poll workers and renting voting centers. While fewer are needed in VBM elections, greater expenses are incurred for printing ballots (including instructions and return envelopes) and postage.⁴² Most election costs fall on counties and local jurisdictions,⁴³ although in Maryland, the state and counties split some of the costs. According to the Code of Maryland Regulations, the state acquires and certifies voting technology, such as pollbooks and scanners, and the costs are split 50/50 between the state and the localities. The state also helps pay for the postage-paid ballot returns and maintains the voter registration database. Local counties support the operation of their local election boards as well as polling place expenses (such as space rentals and poll workers) and supplies. Providing drop boxes may also add expense, including surveillance set-up and timely retrieval of ballots from them.

It is possible that VBM may be costlier in early years of transition because of the need to operate both in-person voting options and VBM side-by-side. A study done on Colorado elections found that certain cost categories were reduced by an average 40% after the state shifted to predominantly VBM.⁴⁴ Counties spent an average of \$9.56 per vote in 2014, down from \$15.96 in 2008, and all but three counties spent less per vote in 2014 than in 2008. To the extent that VBM increases election costs—especially in the earlier years of a transition—the burden can be significant, particularly on the smaller counties. However, as seen in Colorado, in the long run expenses have the potential to decline.

Security

Security is a concern in all elections, regardless of method, and several security measures have been discussed already, such as updating voter lists, checking postmarks and signatures on ballots before counting them, and allowing voters to check the status of their returned ballots. Another measure is a high penalty for voter fraud. Violations can run from the hundreds of dollars to thousands of dollars. Anyone who commits voter fraud using a mail ballot risks severe criminal and civil penalties; up to five years in prison and \$10,000 in fines for each act of fraud under federal law, in addition to any state penalties. In Oregon, for example, voting with or signing another person's ballot is a Class C felony punishable by up to five years in prison.⁴⁵ Some states have laws to limit who can return ballots.⁴⁶

VBM has not increased the risk of fraud in states that have been using VBM for many years. Colorado's Secretary of State notes that if there is a possibility of double voting, every case is sent to the attorney general; in 2018, 0.0027 percent of cases were forwarded. Colorado's Elections Director Judd Choate stated that jurisdictions with all-mail elections must constantly update voters' addresses to ensure that the right voters receive the right ballots. As a result, when a person moves, they are unlikely to get the wrong ballot by mail, whereas an in-person voter with an outdated address could be going to the wrong polling place for years. Based on her experience as Washington State's Director of Elections, Lori Augino added that "Of the

nearly 3.2 million ballots cast [in Washington in 2018], only 0.004% of the total ballots cast may have been fraudulent.” None of the five states that hold their elections primarily by mail has had any voter fraud scandals since making that change. Reports that have raised concerns about ballots that are “missing or unaccounted for” have been disputed.⁴⁷

SUMMARY OF THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF VBM

Advantages of VBM include:

- Ease of voting
 - Voters can vote from home, with time and resources to study the candidates and make their choices. This can be especially helpful for complicated ballot questions.
 - Voting is not limited to certain times when polling places are open. Voters who prefer or need to go to a polling place can have that option.
 - Voters do not need to make special arrangements to vote. Workers do not have to take time off, families do not have to arrange childcare, seniors do not have to stand in line.
 - Voters can have multiple options for returning ballots.
 - When voting is easier to do, voting participation (turnout) may increase.
- Safety & Security
 - VBM ensures there is a paper trail since the method relies on paper ballots. This facilitates post-election audits.
 - Voting lists are updated frequently when undeliverable mailings are returned to boards of elections, particularly if informational mailings are done prior to an election.
 - Fraud has not increased in states that have used VBM for many years. Safe and secure elections are a priority regardless of voting method.
- Costs
 - There is potential for long run savings in reduced need for poll workers, a decreased need to rent polling places and trimmed down costs for voting technology, such as pollbooks and scanners.

Disadvantages of VBM include:

- Voting options and results
 - There are fewer in-person polling places and if they are not located conveniently, it can interfere with the ability of people to vote.
 - VBM can pose problems for certain populations who may not have a mailing address or who move often, such as homeless or poor people.
 - People may miss voting with friends and neighbors, and the sense of community tradition it brings.
 - Election results take longer to issue and certify, potentially creating voter confusion if preliminary and final results differ.
- Safety & Security
 - Concerns arise from the potential for family members or others to coerce voters when voting is done outside a polling place.

- Vendor or postal service problems can result in ballot delivery problems. When such problems have occurred, they emerged close to election day and resulted in last-minute challenges for both voters and election officials.
- Even when steps are taken to prevent fraud, some voters remain concerned that irregularities can occur. Voters must trust the election results regardless of the voting method used.
- Costs
 - Some election costs may increase, such as printing costs or expenses of acquiring signature verification software.
 - Voter education and outreach takes on even greater importance and can be costly to conduct.

REFERENCES

¹ Adapted from www.voteathome.org.

² Some states require a reason for requesting an absentee ballot; Maryland offers “no excuse” absentee voting.

³ In Maryland, the State legislature changed the term used for absentee voting to “mail-in voting” during its 2020 session. See State Board of Elections Comprehensive Plan for the 2020 Primary Election (June 2, 2020).

⁴ Thompson, Daniel; Wu, Jennifer; Yoder, Jesse; Hall, Andrew, “The Neutral Partisan Effects of Vote-By-Mail: Evidence From County-Level Rollouts,” Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, Working Paper No. 20-015, April 2020, <https://siepr.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/20-015.pdf>

⁵ Rockville Board of Supervisors of Elections report on November 5, 2019 Election Report, April 6, 2020

⁶ Department of Legislative Services, Office of Policy Analysis, “Covid-19 and Voting By Mail,” Presentation to the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Committee Ways and Means, June 16, 2020.

⁷ Michael Wines, “Which Party Would Benefit Most From Voting By Mail? It’s Complicated,” New York Times, May 26, 2020,

⁸ People convicted of a felony and currently serving a court-ordered sentence of imprisonment are not eligible to vote. See https://elections.maryland.gov/voter_registration/

⁹ In a municipal election in August 2020, some voters in Washington County who only have a P.O. box as their address did not receive their ballots and had to vote provisionally. Election officials believe there was a problem that may have affected some voters whose address is a P.O. box.

¹⁰ Daniel Thompson, Jennifer Wu, Jesse Yoder, Andrew Hall, “Universal Vote-By-Mail Has No Impact on Partisan Turnout or Vote Share,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Vol. 117, No. 25, June 23, 2020 (first published June 9, 2020).

¹¹ League of Women Voters of Washington Education Fund, “An Evaluation of Major Election Methods and Selected State Laws, Fall 2000.

¹² Southwell, Priscilla, “Five Years Later: A Re-Assessment of Oregon’s Vote by Mail Electoral Process,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Jan., 2004), pp. 89-93

¹³ 2017 Maryland Code, Election Law, Title 9 – Voting, Subtitle 5 - Voting by Mail in Special Elections. § 9-501. Voting by mail. Universal Citation: MD Elec Law Code § 9-501 (2017)

¹⁴ Maryland Code, Election Law, Sec. 9-301 and Sec. 9-501. Code of Maryland Regulations.

¹⁵ A voter who requests an absentee ballot online must also provide a driver’s license number or Maryland ID number and the last 4 digits of their social security number.

¹⁶ This is the typical percentage in a presidential election; other elections show lower rates.

¹⁷ If the voter wants to receive the ballot at a different address, the voter must complete a separate absentee ballot application.

¹⁸ The circumstances are: (a) the Maryland Dept of Health or the Social Security Administration notifies them of the voter's death; (b) the voter has been convicted of a felony and is in prison; (c) the voter is under a mental disability and a court has specifically found that the voter can't communicate a desire to participate in the voting process; (d) the voter has been convicted of buying or selling votes; (e) the voter has moved, which typically is learned when the Postal Service returns a mailed sample ballot with an address correction or is undeliverable.

¹⁹ Even states that have been using VBM for years get ballots returned. Oregon has been mailing ballots to voters since 1998 and estimates that 2-3% are returned; Washington has used VBM since 2005 and estimates that 10% are returned as undeliverable.

²⁰ Maryland State Board of Elections, "Report on June 2 Election & Recommendations for November 3 Election," issued July 2, 2020.

https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/June%202%20Election%20Report_Final%2007022020.pdf

²¹ Maryland State Board of Elections, Presentation to the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Committee on Ways and Means, June 16, 2020

²² For example, secure ballots require specialized paper that can be read by optical scanners and envelopes with barcodes specific to each voter. See U.S. Election Assistance Commission, "Managing an Increase in Outbound Ballots." https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/electionofficials/vbm/Outbound_Mail_Ballots.pdf

²³ Information obtained from the Secretary of State website for each state.

²⁴ Maryland Code, Election Law, Sec. 9-310, Code of Maryland Regulations. For the 2020 general election, the plan is for the return envelope ballots to have a flap to cover the voter's name and signature.

²⁵ U.S. Election Assistance Commission, "Managing an Increase in Outbound Ballots."

https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/electionofficials/vbm/Outbound_Mail_Ballots.pdf

²⁶ Mike Baker, "The Facts About Mail-in Voting and Voter Fraud," New York Times, June 22, 2020.

²⁷ Survey of the Performance of American Elections at Harvard University. See MIT Election and Science Lab, <https://electionlab.mit.edu/research/voting-mail-and-absentee-voting>

²⁸ https://elections.maryland.gov/about/meeting_materials/May_14_2020.pdf

²⁹ Maryland State Board of Elections, Report on the June 2 Election and Recommendations for November 3 Election. Issued July 2, 2020.

https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/June%202%20Election%20Report_Final%2007022020.pdf

³⁰ Amanda King, "Voter Service and Polling Centers," Issue Brief, Legislative Council Staff, Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature, Number 20-06, February 2020. Also, Maryland State Board of Elections, Early Voting, https://elections.maryland.gov/voting/early_voting.html

³¹ Maryland State Board of Elections, Report on the June 2 Election and Recommendations for November 3 Election. Issued July 2, 2020.

https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/June%202%20Election%20Report_Final%2007022020.pdf

³² "Canvass" includes the entire process of vote tallying, vote tabulation, and vote verification or audit, culminating in the production and certification of the official election results. See Code Of Maryland Regulations, Sec. 11-101.

³³ Maryland Code, Election Law, Sec. 9-310, Code of Maryland Regulations

³⁴ National Conference of State Legislatures, "Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail, and Other Voting at Home Options, July 10, 2020. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx>.

³⁵ U.S. Election Assistance Commission, "Signature Verification and Cure Process,"

https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/electionofficials/vbm/Signature_Verification_Cure_Process.pdf

³⁶ Signature Verification and Mail Ballots: Guaranteeing Access While Preserving Integrity A Case Study of California's Every Vote Counts Act, Policy Practicum: Every Vote Counts (Law 806Z) Spring 2019-20, Stanford Law School, Law and Policy Lab, May 15, 2020

³⁷ In total, 31 states use signature verification and 19 provide an opportunity for voters to correct a questionable signature. See National Conference of State Legislatures, "VOPP: Table 14: How States Verify Voted Absentee Ballots" 4/17/2020, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vopp-table-14-how-states-verify-voted-absentee.aspx>. See also "VOPP: Table 15: States That Permit Voters to Correct Signature Discrepancies," 8/7/2020, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vopp-table-15-states-that-permit-voters-to-correct-signature-discrepancies.aspx>

³⁸ Danielle Root and Adam Barclay, "Voter Suppression During the 2018 Midterm Elections," Center for American Progress, November 20, 2018.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2018/11/20/461296/voter-suppression-2018-midterm-elections/>

³⁹ Verified Voting, "COVID-19 and Trustworthy Elections," April 10, 2020.

<https://verifiedvoting.org/publication/covid-19-and-trustworthy-elections/>

⁴⁰ For absentee ballots, canvassing may begin at 8:00 a.m. on the Wednesday after election day; see Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) Section 11-302. For special elections, canvassing may begin at 2:00 p.m. on the day of a special election; see COMAR Section 9-506.

⁴¹ https://elections.maryland.gov/about/documents/Canvass_Agenda_06_02_2020.pdf

⁴² Ballot printing costs may increase because ballots must be printed for every voter, not just for those who vote in-person.

⁴³ National Council of State Legislatures, "Election Costs, What States Pay," August 3, 2018,

<https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/election-costs.aspx>.

⁴⁴ See Pew Charitable Trusts, "Colorado Voting Reforms: Early Results," March 2016.

file:///C:/Users/Linda/Documents/LWV/All%20Mail-In%20Voting/coloradovotingreformsearlyresults_pew.pdf

⁴⁵ Oregon Secretary of State, Elections Division, ORS 260.715

⁴⁶ For example, California (which is transitioning to VBM) made it illegal to get paid to collect ballots and for employers to ask employees to bring their ballots into their workplace.

⁴⁷ For example, RealClearPolitics warned of fraud in mail-in voting, citing an analysis that millions of ballots were missing or unaccounted for in elections conducted between 2012-2018. The analysis counted unreturned ballots as missing, acknowledging that there was no evidence that missing ballots were used fraudulently. The National Vote At Home Institute notes that an unreturned ballot is not missing; rather it is not voted. The Brennan Center for Justice states there is no evidence that voting by mail results in significant fraud and the threat is "infinitesimally small." <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/why-vote-mail-option-necessary>

GD_Against_SB0029.pdf

Uploaded by: Decker, Greg

Position: UNF

Mail-in ballots are subject to fraud and the appearance of fraud.

In person voting is the best way to insure the integrity of the vote and promote confidence in the election result.

Voter lists in all jurisdictions are not updated regularly. There are many names on the voter lists that are no longer eligible including those who have moved out of the district or out of state and those who have died or become ineligible for other reasons.

Mass-mailed ballots are subject to being “harvested” by removing them from mail boxes or from trash cans. Harvesting groups can unfairly pressure voters, particularly elderly or young voters, to vote for a specific candidate or slate of candidates. This practice is prevented with in person voting.

When a voter votes at their Precinct Polling Place on Election Day or during Early Voting their ballot is completely secret and their ability to vote for the candidates of their choice is protected. They know their ballot is counted because they place the ballot in the collator. They have no such assurance with an election by mail.

Marylanders expect to know election results on election night or at least by the next day. Delays in vote tabulations for weeks reduces confidence in the election results. The canvassing of ballots in elections-by-mail may be prolonged over weeks.

Maryland has long had poll-watchers observe the vote counting for absentee ballots. It is very difficult to have volunteer poll-watchers observe vote counting over several weeks.

Mail-in ballots are subject to fraud and the appearance of fraud.

In person voting is the best way to insure the integrity of the vote and promote confidence in the election result.

Greg Decker
7628 Augustine Way
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

Testimony on SB 29 - Elections by Mail - Oppose.p

Uploaded by: Ennis, Ella

Position: UNF

To: The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman
and Members of the
Education, Health and Environment Committee
Senate of Maryland
Annapolis, Maryland

Dear Chairman and Committee Members,

RE: SB 29 – Elections by Mail – OPPOSE

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for Elections by Mail legislation.

I strongly oppose SB 29– Elections by Mail. Advocates of Elections by Mail have pointed to the wide spread use of mail-in ballots in 2020 as evidence that this process is very popular. I don't think this process was so popular. The 2020 election forced many people to vote by mail because less than 1/4 of polling places were open for voting. If you chose to vote in person you had to wait for 2 hours or more because of the reduction of the number of polling places. Real and media-heightened fear over the COVID 19 virus pushed people to vote by mail.

SB 29 would have ballots mailed to all persons listed on the voters' rolls. Voters' Lists in all jurisdictions are not updated regularly. Voters' rolls contain many names of individuals that are no longer eligible to vote including those who have moved out of the district or the state; and, those of people who have died or become ineligible for other reasons. Mass-mailed ballots are subject to being lost in the mail or tampered with. The ballots can be "harvested" by removing them from mail boxes or from trash cans, particularly in multi-family housing communities. Vote harvesting groups can unfairly pressure voters, particularly the elderly or very young voters to vote for a specific candidate or slate of candidates or to allow them to return the ballots or even "help" them fill out their ballots. According to the State Board of Elections signature verification is not required on mail-in ballots.

When a voter votes at their Polling Place on Election Day or during Early Voting their ballot is completely secret and their ability to vote for the candidates of their choice is protected. They know their ballot is counted because they place the ballot in the collator. They have no such assurance with an election by mail. U.S. Mail delivery has become much less reliable and adding millions of "mail-in" ballots will flood the system and put delivery of ballots at risk.

Marylanders expect to know election results on election night or the following day. Delays in vote tabulations for days or weeks reduces confidence in the election results. The canvassing of ballots in elections-by-mail is prolonged over weeks. "Elections by mail" are much less secure and more susceptible to vote manipulation or leaking of the total votes tallied for a candidate to date while ballots are still being mailed.

Maryland has long had poll-watchers observe the vote counting for absentee ballots. It is very difficult to have volunteer poll-watchers available to observe vote counting over several weeks. In the 2020 election no poll watchers were allowed to observe the counting of mailed ballots in person.

In-person elections at all polling places on one Election Day have worked for hundreds of years. The system isn't broken and doesn't need to be "fixed" by elections by mail.

Please give SB 29 an unfavorable Report.

Ella Ennis

P.O. Box 437

Port Republic, MD 20676

E-mail: eee437@comcast.net

SB 29 testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Waterman, Diana

Position: UNF



MARYLAND FEDERATION *of* Republican Women

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman, and Members, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

RE: SB 29 - OPPOSE

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the more than 1300 members of the Maryland Federation of Republican Women (MFRW), representing citizens from across Maryland, I am writing to ask you for Unfavorable Report on SB 29.

We strongly oppose SB 29. The 2020 Primary Election was done entirely by mail (mailing ballots to every voter) and the General Election forced many people to vote by mail because less than 1/3 of polling places were open for voting.

SB 29 mandates that a ballot will be mailed to all persons listed on the voters' rolls as active voters. Mail in voting already exists in our State – any registered voter may request to vote by mail. If a voter wants to vote by mail, they can.

Our Voter Rolls are not updated regularly. Having used Door-to-Door walk books prepared from our Voter Rolls, I have witnessed firsthand that our voter rolls contain many names of individuals that are no longer eligible to vote including those who have moved out of the district or the state; and those of people who have died or become ineligible for other reasons.

Mass-mailed ballots create the opportunity for unscrupulous individuals to “harvest ballots” by removing them from individuals' mail boxes or from trash cans in multi-family housing communities where residents have discarded them. These harvested ballots can then be voted by anyone and not the registered voter. Mass-mailed ballots also afford some individuals the ability to unfairly pressure voters, particularly the elderly or very young voters, to vote for a specific candidate or slate of candidates by “helping” them fill out their ballot. And then there is the whole discussion about mail delays that we have all witnessed in our lives in 2020 and still ongoing.

When a voter votes at their Polling Place on Election Day or during Early Voting their ballot is completely secret and their ability to vote for the candidates of their choice is protected. They know their ballot is counted because they place the ballot in the collator. They have no such assurance with an election by mail. U.S. Mail delivery has become much less reliable and adding millions of “mail-in” ballots will flood the system and put delivery of ballots at risk.

Once all the ballots have been cast and hopefully returned to the Board of Elections, Marylanders had to wait many days (and in some cases weeks) to find out who won. Delays in vote tabulations for days or weeks reduces confidence in the election results. The canvassing of ballots in elections-by-mail is prolonged over weeks with much higher costs for the labor to process all the ballots.

For many reasons, mailing a ballot to every registered voter is a much less secure way to conduct our elections and is much more susceptible to vote manipulation. In-person elections at all polling places has worked for hundreds of years. The system is not broken and does not need to be “fixed” by mailing ballots to every registered voter on the State Voter Rolls. Maryland voters already have many days to vote in person between Early Voting and Election Day and Absentee Ballots (mail in ballots) are available to any registered voter who requests one. There is no need for mandating mailing ballot to everyone.

In conclusion, the members of the Maryland Federation of Republican Women strongly oppose SB 29 and ask for an Unfavorable Report

Thank you,

Diana D Waterman

Diana Waterman
President, Maryland Federation of Republican Women
560 Sparks Mill Road, Centreville, MD 21617
410-490-0227
diana@watermanrealty.com

SB 029 Written Testimony 2_4_2021.pdf

Uploaded by: Waychoff, Amy

Position: UNF

SB 029
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Oppose

February 4, 2021

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide my written testimony. I strongly oppose SB 029. Voting in-person on election day worked for hundreds of years. The system isn't broken and does not need to be "fixed."

This bill undermines the public's faith in the election system. When a voter places their ballot in a secure location on Election Day or during early voting, they know their ballot is secret and will be counted. They have no such assurance when voting by mail. Mass-mailed ballots are subject to being "harvested" by removing them from mail boxes or from trash cans. Harvesting groups can unfairly pressure voters, particularly elderly and young voters. Mass mailing ballots also opens the door to abuses such as deceased people voting or people voting who no longer live in the state. These problems in turn are due to the lack of proper vetting of voters lists.

Please deliver an unfavorable report on SB 029. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Sincerely,

Amy Waychoff
4511 Amherst Lane
Bethesda, MD 20814
LD 18
waychoff@comcast.net

SB 29 written.pdf

Uploaded by: White, Anne

Position: UNF

To: Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chairman Kagan and distinguished members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

Please accept this written testimony in **opposition** to SB on **Elections by Mail** as introduced by Senator Kramer

**SB 29 Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Voting by Mail - opposed**

If we have learned nothing from our most recent election, it is that “voting by mail” is an absolute disaster and ripe for opportunities of election fraud and voter fraud.

As a Election Judge, I worked 5 days of the most recent election cycle in November, 2020 (4 days of early voting and election day) for a total of 75 hours. The two polling centers where I worked ran efficiently and we received many compliments from voters. From my observations Maryland does very well in planning and executing the actual voting days. We processed over 11,000 voters during the first four days of Early Voting and another 2100+ voters on Election Day at the voting center where I was assigned.

However, the most critical area where our state could do much better is in maintaining an accurate roster of eligible voters. I know from first hand experience that that list is NOT up-to-date and far from accurate. My own son and his wife moved from Maryland 3 years ago, yet they are still listed on the Anne Arundel County roster.

Therefore, to mail an actual ballot to this list is not only very expensive, but is open to **unsecured** ballots floating around for anyone to fraudulently vote. Additionally, voters may be subjected to coercion, intimidation, or simply have their ballot forged. Even more problems would arise as opportunities for ballot harvesting and vote buying would increase. There is absolutely **NO chain of custody with mail-in ballots**.

As we have recently seen in the news, exposing and proving instances of fraud after an election is difficult and leaves the perpetrators without any punishment or accountability. **Why would we want to invite these problems to Maryland?**

To be clear, the procedure of “absentee” ballots that Maryland has used for decades in which a voter who cannot vote “in-person” **REQUESTS** an absentee ballot by signed application works well as those applications can be **verified** prior to sending a ballot. **Verification** is the key word, here!

Even sending **applications** to those **who do not request** them is opening the door to potential misuse. The most obvious danger to mail-in ballots is that they are completed and returned without any oversight or protocols by election officials plus all the reasons stated above.

Sadly, the U.S. Postal system has seen severe delays in processing even regular mail, much less the onslaught of millions of ballots dumped on an already struggling system during a seasonal timeframe. As such, there is no guarantee that ballots will arrive in time. Just this week a state judge in Virginia declared that ballots received after the election were illegal. An often overlooked point is that mail with pre-printed postage is NOT time/date stamped as it is processed through high speed sorting machines. Sometimes, even mail with a regular stamp has no postmark or cancellation stamp. There is no way to verify the actual mailing date as timely.

Thankfully, Maryland was not among the several states making national headlines for the mishandling of mail-in ballots. **Again, why would Maryland want to potentially be the topic of major election scandal the next time around?**

To summarize, the most obvious flaws in mass “vote-by-mail” include delayed results, less secure ballots, higher rejection rate, lost or mis-used ballots, and potential for outright fraud due to being altered, stolen or forged, and lastly, late arrival of ballots by the postal service.

Any type of voter fraud is extremely **dangerous** to our election, BUT most importantly **WE CAN PREVENT this potential for voter and election fraud in future elections.**

We deserve an election system that is fair, secure, accurate, and timely.

For all of these reasons please vote **against SB 29** as it will only lead to more **distrust** of our election system, which will only serve to drive voters away from engaging in the voting process. **We need to do everything possible to ensure the integrity of our elections or we will have no Republic left.**

I hope you will take a bit of extra time to read this linked report: <https://report.heritage.org/lm268>

Thank you,
Respectfully,
Anne White
Anne Arundel County

SB 29 - Election Law - Voting - Elections by Mail,

Uploaded by: Antoine, Joanne

Position: INFO

February 4, 2021

Testimony on SB 29
Election Law - Voting - Elections by Mail, Polling Places, and Early Voting Centers
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Information

Common Cause Maryland takes no position on SB 29 which would establish a vote by mail program, coupled with in-person voting options, in the state.

Currently, Maryland voters have the option of voting at an early voting center prior to Election Day or by mail-in ballot. While many have taken advantage of both programs, we agree that we should be considering vote by mail as a program to drive greater participation in our elections. Our existing process can be burdensome for many eligible voters who want to participate - most voters citing conflicting schedules, inconvenient hours, and accessibility as their reason for not voting.

A vote by mail system would help to address all of those issues. In 2019, the City of Rockville nearly doubled turnout using vote by mail system in their municipal election. We also saw the success of the program during the 2020 primary election where participation overwhelmingly increased in jurisdictions like Baltimore City. These programs provide voters with more time to research the candidates and issues and the ease of being able to vote from their place of residence. Vote by mail would also help address the lack of election resources and poll workers in the state.

While SB 29 aims to establish a working program, we need to work collectively to identify a vote by mail system that would benefit all Marylanders – ensuring we are taking into consideration how a program would impact different groups of voters, especially those with disabilities or transient communities.

We instead urge the committee to consider conducting a study of vote by mail in consultation with the State Board of Elections, Maryland Association of Election Officials, as well as a limited pool of voting rights advocates representing communities of voters that would be impacted by these changes. A study would allow us to study best practices and debunk misinformation on the impact these programs have on communities of color.

We also urge the committee to prioritize improving the existing mail-in voting process: making secure drop boxes available in all elections, improving the process for tracking ballots, creating a process for curing mail-in ballots, providing the option to opt into a permanent mail-in list, and ensuring mail-in ballots envelopes are easily recognizable and that the instructions are easy to understand.

Thank you to the sponsor for recognizing the potential of vote by mail and we look forward to working collectively to establish a program in the near future.