

**SB283\_FAV\_FEMI AGABALOGUN.pdf**

Uploaded by: Agabalogun, Femi

Position: FAV

Femi Agabalogun

Testimony for SB283

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs (EHEA) committee

Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021

Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

Hello, my name is Femi Agabalogun, and I am a sophomore at Johns Hopkins University. First, I want to thank Chair Pinsky and the committee for the opportunity to give my thoughts concerning the importance of this issue and thank Senator Elfreth for introducing the bill. I feel it is urgent that the senators vote in favor of Senate Bill 283, the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act, due to voting's long-term consequences. Currently, I am in a professional communications class that focuses on government accountability initiatives. The topic of voting was an inevitable one, and my professor was curious about whether there were students who were old enough to vote that did not register and what their reason was for not doing so. One of my classmates is from New York and mentioned he did not have a driver's license at the time, and that is needed for the registration. However, he did not think it was worth the effort to file for a license less application because he lived in a predominantly republican county despite being a democrat. He felt that his vote would not matter, and this is a sentiment that many young voters share. In 2020, the national turnout of voters under 29 was about half compared to two-thirds for all eligible voters. The Voter Empowerment Act is necessary so that student voters realize that their vote can make a difference, and this act will increase their level of participation. This is important since numerous studies have shown that voting is habit-forming, and youth who vote

are more likely to become life-long voters. If the youth does not vote, then the turnout will continue to decrease and prompts the election of leaders whose views are not representative of their respective population's views. Ultimately, if passed, the Voter Empowerment Act has the power to affect future generations in that more people feel like their vote matters because it should matter. Once again, thank you for your time and consideration, and I hope you consider giving the bill a favorable report.

**UMDSGA\_FAV\_SB0283.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alpert, Dan

Position: FAV

The University of Maryland Student Government Association  
Testimony for SB0283  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021  
Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act  
POSITION: FAVORABLE

My name is Dan Alpert and I am the Student Body President at the University of Maryland, College Park. I'd like to start by thanking Chair Pinsky and all the members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to share our thoughts on this important bill, as well as Senator Elfreth for introducing the legislation, which will enable hundreds of thousands of students to have the resources and knowledge to be civically engaged for years to come.

It is a fact that the habits students develop during their time in school stay with them long after graduation. Of vital importance is the lifelong habit of civic engagement, which starts by making it easier for students to be engaged while still enrolled.

At a campus as active as ours, there is no shortage of opportunities to volunteer, take action, and get involved. But when it comes to voting, college students face barriers that don't exist for other populations, resulting in a lack of access to the plethora of opportunities at hand. This bill would expand access by mandating a full-time staff member at each of our institutions who is dedicated to student voting and who will help students navigate unique complexities. Students must find time to vote, figure out how to register, decide whether to register at home or at school, and inform themselves on the candidates and ballot initiatives. Currently, these responsibilities are shared by our student government's Director of Civic Engagement and a university staff member, both of whom have responsibilities outside of the work they do for civic education. This past election cycle, we saw incredible demand from departments across campus asking for help in implementing their own voting initiatives. A full-time coordinator would significantly help by bringing together efforts from across campus, providing quick answers to voting questions, and implementing civic education in curricula across academic fields.

One of the most frequent questions posed to our team ahead of the 2020 election was how to vote in the fastest, most convenient manner. With chaotic schedules and usually no means of transportation, voting is a significant time commitment for students. While the voting process will no doubt change as a result of this past election, voting early or by mail still presents major challenges such as those I previously mentioned. A two-hour excused absence is a simple solution that opens up the opportunity for those with multiple courses, internships, and jobs to make their voice heard, and aligns students with faculty and staff who already have two hours to vote on Election Day.

If our goal is to expand access to the ballot box, then there is no better way to empower student voters than by enacting the policies prescribed in this bill. These changes further the commitment our state has to college student voter engagement and we, the Student Government Association at the University of Maryland, urge a favorable report for the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act.

Sincerely,

Dan Alpert, *Student Body President*  
Alexandra Marquez, *Director of Civic Engagement*  
Ben Baitman, *Director of Government Affairs*

# **SB 283 - Student and Military Voter Empowerment Ac**

Uploaded by: Antoine, Joanne

Position: FAV

February 4, 2021

**Testimony on SB 283**  
**Election Law - Institutions of Higher Education - Voter Registration and Voting by Students (Student & Military**  
**Voter Empowerment Act of 2021)**  
**Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 283 which aims to increase access to voter information and the overall participation of students by establishing campus vote coordinators who work to develop campus voter education plans in collaboration with students, ensuring campuses have voter information readily available on their websites, and providing institutions of higher education the opportunity to provide input to local boards of elections as they select polling locations.

Institutions of Higher Education play a critical role in creating lifelong voters and civic leaders. For most students, their first experience voting or getting involved in civic life happens during their time at a college or university. These institutions are well positioned to not only encourage eligible students to vote, but also help them navigate the process of voting and understanding the information on their ballots.

For many students going to college is their first time stepping out into the real world and gaining independence. Some are far from home and loved ones but are still trying to build a life where they can be informed citizens with a stable future. They may not be aware of what a polling location is or even how to cast a vote. This is especially true for many immigrant students, new voters and Americans, who make up a large portion of college campuses.

Upon graduation from an institution of higher education, students are expected to be properly informed, active participants in our democracy. Contrary to this, many students remain unaware of certain aspects of the voting process and in turn graduate without ever learning such knowledge. With this in mind, Institutions of higher education throughout the state should be doing all that they can to encourage voter participation on their campus communities. SB 283 provides them with straightforward opportunities to do so.

With the Implementation of this bill, students will now have the support of faculty and staff when navigating the election process. SB 283 will promote the need for collaboration between election officials, student organizations and college campuses. This collaboration will ensure that students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities where overall participation is [declining](#) and other Institutions are properly Informed and educated on all aspects of the voting process.

We have the opportunity today to make a change for the young people In Maryland. Our actions will ensure that that students today and, in the future, will never be confused about voting. Voter participation will increase when we make it our mission to educate the youth. College campuses open each day to educate our students on complex laws, mathematical equations and complex theories, it should not be a hassle then to educate students on our democracy and the methods to contribute to it working effectively.

We urge a favorable report.

**SB283\_FAV\_Walee Attia.pdf**

Uploaded by: Attia, Walee

Position: FAV



Walee Attia  
Testimony for SB283  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs (EHEA) committee  
Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021  
Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

Hello, my name is Walee Attia and I reside in Baltimore City. I am a sophomore at Johns Hopkins University. I would first like to thank Chair Pinsky and the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs committee for the opportunity to share why this issue is important. I would also like to thank Senator Elfreth for introducing this bill.

It has long been asked of younger people including college students to become more engaged in the voting process and making their voices heard. Encouraging civic engagement and voter turnout strengthens our democracy, an effort that should not be a partisan issue. Ensuring that resources and information are provided is a necessary step in enabling more students to vote. The Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act helps make voting as accessible as possible such as by allocating two-hour time windows for Maryland students to vote.

I know from experience that the voting registration process can seem difficult to navigate. Despite my excitement to turn 18 and be able to vote, I needed to reach out to my parents and other resources online to complete registration. Many of my friends did not vote at all because they did not have the resources to navigate the process themselves, or the time to figure it out during their busy schedules as college students. For many, registering to vote can be the first formal paperwork they complete on their own. The VEA will enable colleges to make voting as accessible as possible by having student voting coordinators and providing voter registration links where students register for courses.

I strongly support passing the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act and hope all of you take this crucial step towards a stronger democracy as well. Thank you.

**SB283\_FAV\_LUBNA AZMI.pdf**

Uploaded by: Azmi, Lubna

Position: FAV

Lubna Azmi  
Testimony for SB283  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs (EHEA) committee  
Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021  
Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Hello, my name is Lubna Azmi and I reside in Baltimore City. I am a sophomore at Johns Hopkins University. I would first like to thank Senator Elfreth for the proposal of the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act.

Strengthening our democracy should not have to be a partisan issue. Bills like the VEA should be passed unquestionably each time they are presented. We have serious issues of disenfranchisement in this country, especially in our state. Although there are many young people that are actively engaged in politics, whether they cast their vote each election or they keep up with political news, many more do not. I can speak to personal experience. Many of my friends, all college aged, do not feel that their voices are heard.

Like my friend Sami. The voting process is so tedious, he has never even registered to vote due to the barriers that come in the way. He is always working and doesn't get the chance to think much of things outside of his and his family's survival.

Or my friend Daniella, who missed her absentee ballot deadline and wasn't able to go in person this past election due how far the polling place was.

Or my friend CJ who couldn't navigate his voter registration due to lack of knowledge because his family is undocumented. He never learned how to vote at home, and he never learned in school.

Every time we refuse to make voting easier, we are continuing to allow the suppression of somebody's voice.

It is due to the incredible work of these officials and of organizers like many here today including Black Girls Vote, Maryland PIRG, Common Cause, and the League of Women Voters. We need to honor their work and honor the constituents of this state. I am in strong favor of the passing of the VEA, and I hope all of you here today help to strengthen our democracy by voting in favor of it as well. Thank you.

**SB0283-FAV-DTMG-2-4-21.pdf**

Uploaded by: Bartlett, Olivia

Position: FAV



**Meghana Kotraiah, DoTheMostGood Elections Team**

**Committee:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Testimony on:** SB0283 -- Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** February 4, 2021

**Bill Contact:** Senator Sarah Elfreth

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that support and uplift all members of its communities. DTMG strongly supports SB0283 because it empowers groups of low-propensity voters to participate in, and be informed of, their democracy.

According to the Washington Post, during the early voting period in Maryland for the 2020 General Election “more than 160,000 people voted in person Monday, exceeding the previous single-day record of 143,000 that was set on the last day of early voting in 2016.” This resulted in extremely long lines. Citizens waited for hours to cast their ballot. While their determination is admirable, long wait times are a form of voter suppression. Research conducted by Wharton found “in various cases, using different kinds of data, that non-whites end up waiting longer to vote than whites do.” This is further marginalization of communities of color.

SB0283 addresses this problem. SB0283 will require a local board of elections to contact and obtain input from several types of large residential institutional communities when establishing precinct boundaries and designating the location of polling places. The listed institutions - institutions of higher education, continuing care retirement communities, senior communities, and military installations - include groups of very low propensity voters. In 2016, the country wide voter turnout was 54.8%, but voter turnout for college students was 48.3% and for active-duty military 43%. While voter turnout tends to be high for senior citizens, they can be disenfranchised just as well by long lines.

Local boards of elections will use the data they collect to draw boundaries and set voting locations that accommodate these populations. With these populations already having below average voter turnout, it is important that we support their civic engagement - by reducing all barriers to voting and taking their input into account while we build our voting systems.

SB0283 further uplifts student voters with provisions that establish a website page with pertinent information, designate a student voting coordinator at institutions of higher education, create student voting plans, disseminate resources to student bodies, excuse students from class to vote, and additionally, hold educational institutions accountable to these requirements. These provisions are *vital* to increasing student voter turnout. Many students are first time voters - and lack the experience and information that comes with years of voting. The formation and distribution of resources will guide and encourage this underrepresented community to vote and participate in our democracy.

In summary, this bill is a strong plan to empower groups of low propensity voters. It is important that these communities be considered in the establishment of voting systems - precinct boundaries and location decisions - as well as empowered by the availability of resources.

For all of these reasons, DTMG strongly supports SB0283 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

**Meghana Kotraiah**

Co-lead, DoTheMostGood Elections Team

Meghana.kot55@gmail.com

240-342-1856

**SB0283\_FSU\_FAV\_Delanie Blubaugh.pdf**

Uploaded by: Blubaugh, Delanie

Position: FAV

Delanie Blubaugh, Frostburg State University Student Government Association, Student Affairs Committee Chair; University System of Maryland Civic Engagement Student Leadership Committee, Co-Chair

Testimony for SB 283 Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee Thursday, Feb. 4th, 2021 Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

POSITION: Favorable

I am Delanie Blubaugh, a junior Political Science and Legal Studies double major at Frostburg State University. In addition to my studies, I serve as the Student Affairs Committee Chair for FSU's Student Government Association, Editor in Chief of The Bottom Line, FSU's independent student newspaper, and Co-Chair of the University System of Maryland Civic Engagement Student Leadership Committee.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this issue, and why I think this bill is a necessary step for achieving voter equity for students across the state, as well as our Maryland military men and women. Additionally, thank you to Delegate Luedtke and Senator Elfreth for introducing this bill during this legislative session.

The Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act of 2021 is a comprehensive effort to provide Maryland students and military personnel with resources, information, and avenues for participating and being engaged civically. It is imperative to proper, free, and fair democratic practices that students and men and women in the military across the state have convenient avenues for registering to vote, as well as having easy access to resources that help them to participate civically.

In my role as Co-Chair of the University System of Maryland Civic Engagement Student Leadership Committee, I saw students across the state initiating civic engagement-oriented seminars, activities, and events that educated their peers and instilled in so many of them the importance of a lifelong dedication to their civic duty. However, I also saw and experienced firsthand how challenging it was for students across the state to initiate these practices and instill civic responsibility in their peers without state policies that supported their mission.

I am lucky to have grown up in a family where civic duty and responsibility were significant core values. However, many students and young people who turned 18, or were able to vote for the first time, in 2020 may not have been so lucky to be familiar with civic duty and the procedures they must follow to cast their ballots. Coupled with the significant changes made to mail-in voting and other procedures as a result of the pandemic, this bill could not come at a more important and reflective time.

An important aspect of this bill requires local Boards of Elections to include and consult large residential institutional communities in the decision to select polling locations. Even in my small community of Frostburg, Maryland, many FSU students lack the transportation to get them to



and from their polling place. By requiring local Boards of Elections to consult with these communities, students at Frostburg State would have a seat at the table in determining a polling location that fits their needs.

The passage of SB 283 is an imperative bill that seeks to improve inequities regarding student and military voting and civic engagement. In a time where so many inequities have come to light and been emboldened by the COVID-19 pandemic, this bill comes at just the right time.

The Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act of 2021 is necessary legislation to provide students and military personnel the proper channels to exercise their right to vote and become more engaged civically.

I am very much in support of this essential legislation, and urge all on the committee to support it as well.

Thank you.

**SB283\_ Coble.Hopkins\_Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Coble, Annie

Position: FAV

TO: The Honorable Paul Pinsky  
Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Annie Coble  
Assistant Director, State Affairs

DATE: February 4, 2021

Johns Hopkins offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 283 – Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act**.

Johns Hopkins University has made a commitment to increase voter registration and engagement rates. Building on the work of the 2018 "Hopkins Votes" initiative, the University's Center for Social Concern is working to convene university-wide collaborations to increase non-partisan voter registration among students and support every student in casting their ballot in future elections.

This initiative remains focused on voter access, regardless of political affiliation, location or voting method, or registration status. The effort began in 2018 and supported a 30 percentage point increase in the student voting rates from the 2014 mid-term election cycle. Data for the 2020 election has not been released.

The mission of Johns Hopkins University is to educate its students and cultivate their capacity for life-long learning, to foster independent and original research, and to bring the benefits of discovery to the world. Hopkins Votes manifests that purpose by preparing students for life-long learning through their civic engagement. Being part of the political process is imperative for all members of a community, regardless of which community they call home. Hopkins Votes hopes to encourage students to explore both national and local politics – as both are imperative for strengthening our democracy and shedding light on the issues most important to oneself.

This bill would further the goals of Hopkins Votes by ensuring that voter registration and election information is readily available to students and by physically bringing polling locations to our students.

Johns Hopkins University takes seriously its obligation to cultivate active and engaged citizens and urges a **favorable committee report on SB 283**.

**BaltimoreCounty\_FAV\_SB0283.pdf**

Uploaded by: Conner, Charles

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.  
*County Executive*

CHARLES R. CONNER III, ESQ.  
*Director of Government Affairs*

JOEL N. BELLER  
*Deputy Director of Government Affairs*

**BILL NO.:**            **SB 283**

**TITLE:**                Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

**SPONSOR:**           Senator Elfreth

**COMMITTEE:**        Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**POSITION:**         **SUPPORT**

**DATE:**                February 4, 2021

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 283 – Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act. This legislation would make voting more accessible to overseas military, students, and other eligible voters.

Every citizen of the State of Maryland deserves to have their voice heard through the democratic process. This means that information for voter registration, voting locations, and other organizational processes should be as accessible as possible. This is especially important for young, newly eligible voters who register and begin voting early to ensure lifelong participation in this democratic process.

This legislation would help make many of the organizational processes around voting more accessible to all. It would enable overseas military members to digitally register and request an absentee ballot via the federal post card application. SB 283 would also improve access for student eligibility by requiring public higher education institutions to hire a student voting coordinator to implement campus voting plans. In addition, this bill requires the board of election to more explicitly explain the requirements of students voting within the state. Finally, SB 283 requires local board of elections to consult with large residential institutional communities when deciding where to locate polling places. These measures will make voting easier and accessible to all.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 283. For more information, please contact Chuck Conner, Director of Government Affairs at [cconner@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:cconner@baltimorecountymd.gov).

**SB0283\_Represent Maryland\_Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Demnowicz, Cristi

Position: FAV



**BILL: SB0283**

**BILL TITLE: Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act**

**BILL SPONSOR: Senator Elfreth**

**COMMITTEE: EHEA**

**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**HEARING DATE: 2/2/21**

**TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF SB0283**

Cristi Demnowicz  
Represent Maryland

Represent Maryland is an all-volunteer pro-democracy group of Marylanders. One of the major things we believe is that voting should be easily accessible to all citizens. We believe that SB0283 aligns with this goal since it improves processes for informing and educating transitional populations about voting and the associated requirements. Groups such as students, military, and the elderly are often neglected and do not receive the resources to be able to cast their ballots. This legislation would help mitigate this problem, increasing accessibility to more people. We urge a favorable report on this legislation.

Sincerely,  
Cristi Demnowicz  
Chair  
Represent Maryland  
Maryland Voter-D7

Represent Maryland is a grassroots anti-corruption group of citizen advocates that #FightForDemocracy in Maryland.

Our democracy solutions include: Public Election Funds, Independent Redistricting, Special Elections, Ranked Choice Voting, Increased Ethics and Transparency, and Increased Voter Participation.

Learn more about our work at [www.RepresentMaryland.org](http://www.RepresentMaryland.org)

[Cristi@RepresentMaryland.org](mailto:Cristi@RepresentMaryland.org)

Authorized by Represent Maryland PAC, T Miller, Treasurer  
[www.RepresentMaryland.org](http://www.RepresentMaryland.org)

**SenElfreth\_FAV\_SB283.pdf**

Uploaded by: Elfreth, Sarah

Position: FAV



SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH  
*Legislative District 30*  
Anne Arundel County

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Education, Business and Administration

Chair, Pensions

*Senate Chair*

Joint Committee on Administrative,  
Executive, and Legislative Review

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and  
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 4, 2021

**Testimony in Favor of SB0283**  
**Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act**

Chairman Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 283, the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act. This legislation would ensure that active duty service members and college students are able to more easily cast their ballots and ensure that anyone living in large residential institutions, such as senior living facilities and military installations, are properly incorporated into the discussion of precinct boundary decisions by the State Board of Elections (SBE).

This Committee will recall that last session there was similar legislation, sponsored by Senator Lam, was introduced and heard last year. That legislation was focused solely on ensuring that our college students have the tools necessary to partake in their civic duty. While that legislation did not pass, both the House sponsor and I heard the feedback of this Committee, went back to the drawing table, and today present you with an improved and more comprehensive bill.

Additionally, when rewriting the legislation from last session, we took an opportunity to include other groups besides college students that could benefit from increased support in their pursuit of voting -- including active duty service members and those living in large residential institutions such as military installations, continuing care retirement communities, and large senior living facilities.

**For college students:** this legislation will require institutions to designate a staff person as a "student voting coordinator" and require that coordinator to develop and implement a student voting plan to expand civic engagement. This student voting plan will have critical information on how a student can cast their ballot and, amongst other important measures, require a policy for excused absence for voting of no more than 2 hours. Lastly, there will be reporting measures in place to ensure that institutions are doing as much as possible to expand voting access to college students.

According to Tufts University, only 48% of college students voted in the 2016 election, a significantly lower rate than the 61% national average for all Americans. In the 2014 midterm election, only 13% of college students ages 18-24 voted. While voting rates increased in the 2018 midterm election, to 40%, that rate was still 10 percentage points lower than the average for all Americans. This Committee knows that

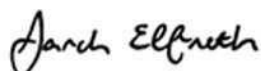
voting is also habit-forming: people who vote at early ages develop the lifelong habit of voting<sup>1</sup>. It is critical that this body create policies to increase voter participation, and thus a habit of lifelong voting, in young Marylanders.

**For active duty service members:** this legislation will make two primary policy changes: first, the bill requires SBE to develop a process for the electronic submission of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA); second, the bill allows the active duty service member to use their federally issued common access card to be used to sign the electronic application. The FPCA is the form that service members must mail to SBE in order to apply for and receive an absentee ballot to vote, and in creating a process that allows for this form to be digitally submitted we would allow for more men and women serving to request their ballot when they otherwise would not be able to because of lack of mailing services or timing. These important policy recommendations came at the suggestion of Delegate Mike Griffith.

**For those living in large residential institutions:** this legislation requires that local election boards seek and obtain input from large residential institutions when undergoing the process of determining precinct boundaries and determining the locations of polling sites. In doing this we will ensure that the residents of these facilities have a voice at the table and are a part of the process -- in turn the residents of these facilities will have a better ability to vote. This policy change is a balanced approach to legislation this Committee heard last year.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not mention that this bill almost makes my career feel as though it has come full circle. Fourteen years ago I came to this Committee as a college student and member of the Student Government at Towson University to testify on a bill that would have increased access for students to vote. It's a story I tell on the campaign trail and - frankly - is a little more colorful than I am comfortable sharing before this Committee. But the gist of it is that participation - whether voting or testifying before this very Committee - is an important life value and practice that we should work to instill in all citizens, particularly young people. In my case, it turned out pretty well.

Sincerely,



Sarah Elfreth

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<sup>1</sup> <https://idhe.tufts.edu/why-college-student-voting-matters>

**SB283\_FAV\_MICUA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Fidler, Sara

Position: FAV

MEMBERS

Capitol Technology University

Goucher College

Hood College

Johns Hopkins University

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Institute College of Art

McDaniel College

Mount St. Mary's University

Notre Dame of Maryland University

St. John's College

Stevenson University

Washington Adventist University

Washington College

AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Ner Israel Rabbinical College

St. Mary's Seminary & University

House Ways and Means Committee

*SB 283 (Elfreth) Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act*

Sara Fidler, President, [sfidler@micua.org](mailto:sfidler@micua.org)

February 4, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony to support **Senate Bill 283 Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act**. MICUA member institutions serve almost 66,000 students in 180 locations throughout the State, and we are proud to be able to offer over 1,600 programs to our students. In addition to other requirements, SB 283 requires institutions of higher education to provide a link to the online voter registration system operated by the State Board of Elections in a location where it may be easily viewed by students registering for course work. The bill also includes a related annual reporting requirement. We would be happy to assist the student voter engagement effort in this manner.

MICUA schools support and encourage civic activity on campuses and launch “Get Out the Vote (GOTV)” efforts for every election. In 2019, several of our institutions participated in the national ALL IN Challenge, which seeks to increase student democratic engagement. Of note, Maryland Institute College of Art was awarded the honor of the highest registration rate in the country and Johns Hopkins University was noted as having the most improved voting rate at a large, private four-year institution.

A few examples of our commitment to support student voter engagement are provided below:

- **Goucher College** – The Goucher Voter Mobilization Team met virtually at the beginning of Fall 2020 to plan voter engagement events through Zoom and share stories about why they wanted to GOTV. Washington Monthly recognized Goucher as one of America’s best colleges for student voting in 2020.

- **Hood College** – Hood has a vested interest in student voter participation since 1918. The Class of 1918 dedicated one of the four columns on Alumnae Hall to represent democracy as one of Hood’s core values. The “Hood Votes” campaign urges students to GOTV through videos, social media, and virtual educational events. The virtual events highlighted the institution’s role in the suffrage movement, explained the electoral college, and hosted a watch party on election night.

- **Loyola University Maryland** – Through LoyolaVotes, students participate in TurboVote, an online platform to provide resources about voter registration, absentee ballots, and election information to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and surrounding community. Turbo Vote ranked Loyola for the second consecutive year for voting initiatives. In 2019, Loyola was awarded the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Silver Seal for their increased participation in student voting.
- **McDaniel College** – McDaniel pulled in many campus offices to coordinate voter registration drives, such as McDaniel’s Office of Student Engagement, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Hoover Library, and the political science department as well as the Carroll County League of Women Voters. Also engaged were student groups such as the Hispano-Latinx Alliance, Alpha Phi Omega, Black Student Union, Green Life, and Sunrise Movement. Corin Cole of Glen Burnie, MD, Black Student Union representative, stated that “if students see other student leaders advocating for voting, then they are more inclined to get involved.”
- **Washington College** – The Student Government Association at Washington College created a “Flock to the Polls” challenge to increase student participation in the 2020 presidential election. Faculty and staff joined the challenge! For every 50 students who took the “I Voted” pledge, the adults in the room vowed to dye their hair or beards pink, wear Halloween costumes to class, create TikTok videos, or take a chilly plunge in the Chester River. Interim Provost and Dean of the College Michael Harvey made good on his promise wearing academic regalia and jumped in the Chester River. There is photographic proof in the MICUA Winter 2021 Newsletter! The students collectively agreed that although the semester was virtual, the voting challenge kept them connected to faculty and students.

Voting is the cornerstone of a strong democracy and there is an educational and civic component to the process that all MICUA member institutions support. We thank the sponsor for working with us last year and for brainstorming with us over the interim to craft legislation this year that fosters civic engagement in a way that is both meaningful and beneficial to all of Maryland’s students.

***MICUA urges a favorable Committee report for SB 283.***

# **Comptroller testimony on SB 283.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ford, Sean

Position: FAV



Peter Franchot  
*Comptroller*

## TESTIMONY OF COMPTROLLER PETER FRANCHOT

### Support - Senate Bill 283 - Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

*Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee*

*February 4, 2021*

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to provide testimony in **support** of **Senate Bill 283 - Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act**. I would like to thank Senator Elfreth for sponsoring this legislation.

Senate Bill 283 would allow active-duty military members to electronically register to vote and request an absentee ballot, as well as make public colleges and universities develop plans to encourage students to vote. We have seen voting rights come under attack recently, and even attempts by some members of Congress to disenfranchise voters by rejecting their state's chosen Presidential electors. We **need** to encourage more people to participate in our Democracy.

This legislation would strengthen our Democratic Process by simply making it easier for active-duty military and students to vote, and has bi-partisan support. For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request a **favorable report** for Senate Bill 283. Thank you for your time and consideration.

###

# **VEA testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Griffith, Jenna

Position: FAV



Jenna Griffith, Student Vote Ambassador Cohort  
Testimony for SB 283  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Tuesday, Feb. 2nd, 2021  
Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Hello, my name is Jenna Griffith and I reside in Garrett County. I am a sophomore at Frostburg State University. I would like to take this opportunity to express why this Voter Empowerment Act will benefit college students and younger generations. I would like to thank Senator Elfreth for introducing the bill.

This act will ensure that everyone is being educated on how and when to vote and given the necessary resources. The act will ensure college students like myself are well aware of the process for their first time voting.

Our country is set up in a Democracy to allow the people to have a say in their government and make changes when necessary. Many countries do not have that freedom so it is important that we use it when we see fit. As it was my first time voting in a presidential election in 2020 I was a little nervous but realized the impact I was going to make with my one vote for the future of our country. Many college students and other citizens think that their vote will not matter and simply will not vote.

From personal experience my father who was born and raised in the U.S never voted in a presidential election until 2020 because he never saw the point. He then realized that in order to make change in our legislators he needed to vote.

In conclusion students and the military should not be worried about not being educated on topics that will affect their everyday lives. I encourage everyone to vote in favor of the bill. Thank you for your time.

**MMC\_SB 283\_2021\_Elfreth\_EHE.pdf**

Uploaded by: Guibao, Patrick

Position: FAV



# MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

*Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy*

WRITTEN TESTIMONY  
IN SUPPORT OF  
SENATE BILL 283  
BEFORE THE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 2, 2021

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Chairman Pinsky, Madam Vice Chair Kagan and distinguished members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs,

The Maryland Military Coalition, a consortium of 16 active duty and veteran service organizations representing nearly 150,000 members throughout our **State believe Senate Bill 283, the Voter Empowerment Act**, is a bill that is vital to our young adults in college and universities and members of the U. S. military.

Voting responsibility has been a cherished principle in the military since the Civil War. President Lincoln pursued voting rights for the nation's military in 1864. It was deeply advanced during World War II by President Roosevelt and has been a viable responsibility since then with all service branches have a voting education officer assigned to all facilities.

The Common Access Card used by both active duty personnel, reservists and civilian DOD employees as well as the Federal Post Card Application for those stationed overseas have eased the capability for military voting.

The MMC sees though the successful passage of SB283 the possibility of having polling places on military installations thus making it easier for the assigned members to vote as well as retirees who may feel more comfortable joining their active service comrades.

In closing the Maryland Military Coalition dutifully request a favorable report on SB 283 and applaud Senator Elfreth for her compassion and foresight in advancing what New York Governor Cuomo who recently called voting "perhaps our most precious freedom."

Yours, respectfully

*Patrick Guibao*

Patrick J. Guibao  
Vice President and  
Legislative Director

Copies to      Senator Elfreth  
                         MMC Officers



**SB0283\_Student\_FAV\_Rachel Huang.pdf**

Uploaded by: Huang, Rachel

Position: FAV

Rachel Huang  
Testimony for SB 283  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Thursday, Feb. 4th, 2021  
Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

Position: FAVORABLE

My name is Rachel Huang and I'm a freshman at Johns Hopkins University. I'd like to thank Senator Elfreth for introducing this bill and Chair Pinsky and the committee for the opportunity to share why this bill is so important to me.

As a daughter of two immigrants, I was taught that I had to prioritize work above all. It is for this reason that I was not well versed in civic engagement and did not have the chance to vote in the previous election. This bill would allow students like me, who grew up in an immigration household, to engage with voting and show that our voice matters too. By eliminating all of the barriers surrounding voting, we will be able to see what democracy is all about.

I am in strong favor of SB 283 and I hope you all today are as well. Thank you for your time.

**SB0283\_FAV\_IRENEKANG.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kang, Irene

Position: FAV

Irene Kang  
Testimony for SB0283  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs (EHEA) Committee  
Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021  
Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act  
POSITION: FAVORABLE

My name is Irene Kang. I am currently a freshman studying International Studies and East Asian Studies at Johns Hopkins University. I would first like to thank Chair Pinsky and the committee for giving me the opportunity to share my perspective on why the passing of this bill matters enormously to me and my communities here in Baltimore and abroad. I would also like to thank Senator Elfreth for introducing the bill.

As both a university student and a lifelong Army brat (having spent the majority of my life on 6 different military installations, with 3 of them being overseas), I have heard and witnessed firsthand the numerous challenges that keep otherwise eligible Americans from participating in the democratic process. They can range from transportation issues and time-constraints to feelings of detachment resulting from distance, lack of community support, and difficulty in finding nonpartisan information. Only 46% of service men and women voted in the 2016 election, and I know that my own mother—now a disabled veteran—faced many of those challenges herself while stationed in South Korea. More recently, I saw many of my friends in Baltimore face several problems regarding out-of-state registration during the 2020 election. Especially with the stress and time commitments of midterm exams, several of them felt as if their choices were reduced to either compromising on their schoolwork or health, voting uninformed (due to lack of resources and/or time allocations), or just not voting at all. To me, this bill is important not only because it will improve accessibility and information to politically disenfranchised demographics, but also because it represents *support*. People, especially young adults, receive messages, both explicit and implicit, about civic participation and politics. These messages come within a household, in school, in extracurriculars, and in their communities. Whether someone is active-duty personnel deployed overseas or a student attending an out-of-state college, they retain the rights to representation and vote, but it often does not feel like it. The passing of this bill will uplift and encourage *all* Americans that their voices DO matter and that efforts to bridge gaps of accessibility are actively being made, state-by-state.

Great strides have already been made by the state of Maryland to modernize voter registration systems with automatic and same-day voting options. Rather than demobilizing past efforts and normalizing the behavior to abstain from voting within certain populations, we need to continue to make steps to overcome the physical, psychological, and social barriers that prevent people from participating. Action should not be tempered by partisan politics. There is still more work needed to ensure the full enfranchisement of any American that has worked or is working to serve our country, and this bill is a step towards it. Through the passing of this bill, we can reduce voter disengagement, increase lifelong civic participation, and uplift voices—both at home and abroad—with a promising leap towards a more legitimate and fair electoral process.

I respectfully urge a favorable report of SB0283. Thank you greatly for your time and consideration.



# **LWVMD testimony - SB 283 - Student and Military Vo**

Uploaded by: Millenson, Janet

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**SB 283 – Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act**

**POSITION: Support**

**BY: Lois Hybl & Richard Willson, Co-Presidents**

**DATE: February 4, 2021**

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active citizen participation. We are concerned that voter registration and participation among younger people continues to be much lower than for older citizens. Although Maryland has made great strides in making voter registration convenient, not all who are eligible, especially college students, are aware of the procedures for registering to vote, how to obtain an absentee ballot, or the times and locations for voting.

Voting — for many college students, it may be their first time — should inspire a sense of accomplishment and pride, allowing them to see that their voices are valued by their county, state, and country. We want every student who has the right to vote to feel this way. However, the process can be challenging for college students who are away from their homes and must choose whether to register at their college address or request an absentee ballot in sufficient time to return it. A similar dilemma is faced by those in the military.

Unfortunately, many young Marylanders are not voting. In 2018, over 72% of people between the ages of 18-24 did not vote in Maryland.<sup>1</sup> By requiring covered higher education institutions to designate a staff member as the Student Voting Coordinator, develop a plan to increase voter registration and turnout, and provide students with convenient links to official election websites, SB 283 can ensure that lack of information will not be a barrier to registering and voting. The bill will also require collaboration between local Boards of Elections and colleges regarding the location of polling places on the campuses of colleges enrolling more than 4,500 students. In addition, it will enable military personnel to use their federal military IDs to register to vote online.

The LWVMD supports SB 283 because our mission is to encourage informed and active participation in government, and the Student Military and Voter Empowerment Act will enable these citizens to have the resources they need to make their voices heard in our elections.

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<sup>1</sup><https://pipeline.bushcenter.org/state/maryland/voting-rates-eligible-voters-18-24/>

# **SB283\_FAV\_Oghenenyoreme Onovae.pdf**

Uploaded by: Onovae, Oghenenyoreme

Position: FAV

Oghenenyoreme Onovae  
Testimony for SB283  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs (EHEA) committee  
Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021  
Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act  
POSITION: FAVORABLE

Good Morning, my name is Nyore Onovae and I am a sophomore studying Biomedical Engineering at Johns Hopkins, and I am a part of the Maryland Student Vote Ambassador Cohort for 2021. I would like to begin by thanking Chair Pinsky and the committee for giving me an opportunity to express my support for Senate Bill 238 and to talk about the bill's importance to the Maryland community. Also, I would like to thank Senator Elfreth for introducing Senate Bill 238. I urge all of you to vote in favor of the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act, which would address low voter participation amongst people under 29 and service members, as well as low youth voter participation amongst Marylanders between the ages of 18 to 24, by making the process of registering to vote and casting a ballot more understandable and accessible. As a Nigerian-American I have seen the importance of voting up close through my parents. My parents immigrated to the United States in 2001; they were not able to vote for awhile until they were able to go through the naturalization process to become citizens. Naturalization ceremonies are an amazing experience to partake in; it is emotional to see so many people who are excited to become citizens in this country- the land of opportunity and possibility. My parents never take an election for granted no matter how local or national; they vote in every single one. Inspired by my parents' sense of duty, I was enthusiastic to register to vote soon as I turned 18. Many people throughout history gave their lives to ensuring and expanding our democratic rights, from service members to activists, therefore, it is imperative for us to carry out our civic duties whenever possible. Not everyone in the world, even in the United States can vote, therefore we should take advantage of every opportunity we have and vote in every election we can. Voting is integral in maintaining a democracy and we cease in becoming a more perfect union when we stop empowering others to vote. The powers that our government holds come from the people and in order to have an effective government that works for the people we must ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute their own opinions into the political arena through casting their vote. Thank you for your time and please vote in favor of empowering young voters and service members by making registering to vote and casting one's ballot more understandable and accessible.

# **SB0283 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ramdat, Satie

Position: FAV

Satie Ramdat, Student Vote Ambassador Cohort  
Testimony for SB0283  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2021  
Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

Position: Favorable

Hello, my name is Satie Ramdat and I live in Prince George's County, Maryland. I am currently a sophomore at Frostburg State University. There are few reasons I think that the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act should be passed. I would like to thank Senator Elfreth for introducing the bill. I would also like to thank Chair Pinsky along with the committee for giving me the opportunity to voice my stance on why this issue is important.

First, The Student and Military Empowerment Act is a bill which ensures that colleges across the U.S and military have access to information concerning voting. It will help people learn about how to vote and which steps they should take to ensure that their vote is on time and counted.

I am a first generation college student and November 2020 was my first time voting. When I was voting, I was in Frostburg and was not able to go back home to vote with my family. I was by myself with a few friends and all of us were trying to figure out how exactly we register for voting as well as how to complete voting. I was one of many people that really wanted to vote and did not know exactly how to get the information to do that. What helped my friends and I the most was social media through people sharing dates concerning registration, early voting, etc. There was not much promotion or information on voting that the school provided. The only thing my school did for the students was give us the day off to go and vote.

I think promoting young people and college students to vote is a great thing to get their voices heard and to grow our democracy. I do not think growing democracy or democratic values should be a debate. People should be educated on different political policies that affect our everyday lives in many different ways. More people should be aware of how to vote, so that they

know they have a voice and are able to use it. Thank you for your time.

**Testimony SB0283.pdf**

Uploaded by: Schablein, Jared

Position: FAV



## **Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act**

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Elfreth

**Committee:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Organization Submitting:** Lower Shore Progressive Caucus

**Person Submitting:** Jared Schablein, LSPC Chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0283 on behalf of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus. The Caucus is a political and activist organization on the Eastern Shore, unaffiliated with any political party, committed to empowering working people by building a Progressive movement on the Lower Eastern Shore.

Ensuring the right to vote is protected for all is a top priority of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus and our members. If the insurrections against our government in D.C just a few short weeks ago have taught us anything it is we need to do everything in our power to protect our Democracy that is under attack.

SB0283 does that by protecting and making it easier to vote for voting blocs that historically have faced barriers in terms of voting in two major ways. The first way is by ensuring that precinct boundaries and polling places are decided with the needs of these groups in mind. This is achieved in this bill by requiring the local board of elections to contact and obtain input from large residential institutional communities including institutions of higher education, retirement communities, senior communities, and military installations when establishing precinct boundaries and designating the location of polling places. This will ensure that these communities have polling places and avenues to participate in our system that are accessible to them.

The second way is by requiring the State Board of Elections to maintain a page on its website that includes certain information about and links regarding voter registration and voting by certain students/other groups. This information will be vital to ensure that these communities have the information they need to be involved and have their voices heard.

It is for these reasons the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus supports this bill and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

**SB0283\_FSU\_FAV\_Joan Andorfer..docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Serafin Andorfer, Joan

Position: FAV

Joan Serafin Andorfer, Ph.D., Professor of Political Science, Frostburg State University; President, Institute for Diplomatic Dialogue in the Americas (IDDA); Secretary, Northeastern Political Science Association (NPSA).

Testimony for SB 283 Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee Thursday, Feb. 4th, 2021 Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

POSITION: Favorable

Thanks to the committee for the opportunity to support this important piece of legislation for voter equity that affects Maryland's students and military men and women. And congratulations and appreciation go to Delegate Luedtke and Senator Elfreth for introducing this bill.

For democracies to function, it is essential that citizens may easily register to vote and have access to information to guide their judgements. This bill advances those efforts for two groups whose needs often go unrecognized. The Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act of 2021 targets constituencies critical to the long-term health of American democracy and I strongly support this effort to facilitate political engagement for students and military members.

I am motivated to testify based on my teaching experiences and the recent dramatic shift in how students view the political process. For the past three decades, it has been my pleasure to teach Political Science at Frostburg State University. My focus is international relations and the study of other political systems like Russia and Great Britain and themes such as democracy, human rights, and civil liberties. My service activities have emphasized experiential learning or learning by doing; students learn about politics by practicing it. This bill would sustain the recent groundswell of student political activism and I support it unreservedly.

Allow me to share an observation about my students who hail from all corners of the state: there is nothing short of a student revolution afoot in terms of political interest and activism. Students had been rather confident that the breakdown of democracy, a tragic feature of the Putin era in Russia for example, could not happen in the great United States. They were certain we had the constitutional guardrails in place to secure the will of the people. Recent events and policies raised alarm bells about our democracy. Students have reacted to those alarms in a variety of forms. Protests. Increased voter turnout. A desire to run for public office. More questions about how other countries have solved the challenges we face. This groundswell of concern, questioning, and activism is the process of democracy renewing itself.

This bill would set the stage for students to form a life-long habit of political participation and civic engagement. In-class straw polls last Spring showed most students planned on voting in the November election and they were not only Political Science majors. However, many were not well acquainted with the mechanics of voting including where to vote or how to get a mail-in ballot. Further, the pandemic raised safety and access issues. These are not insignificant concerns since many students do not have cars and public transportation is more limited here than in metro areas. This bill would make a vital difference on that score by mandating

cooperation between the local Boards of Election and institutions like universities to set the location of polling places. This would allow for often overlooked groups of voters to be accommodated.

If we want to harness greater student activism in politics, set the cornerstone of life-long engagement in the political process, and maintain awareness about issues, the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act of 2021 is the tool to do so.

This essential legislation will positively affect the viability of American democracy for the next generation and I urge all members of the committee to support its passage.

Thank you.

**Rishi Shah\_MD PIRG\_FAV\_SB 283.pdf**

Uploaded by: Shah, Rishi

Position: FAV

# Maryland PIRG



# SIERRA CLUB

MARYLAND CHAPTER



**Testimony for SB 283**  
**Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**  
**Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021**  
**Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act**

## **POSITION: FAVORABLE**

*Maryland PIRG is a state based, non-partisan, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state and a student funded, student directed chapter at the University of Maryland College Park. For forty five years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society. That includes a long history of working to help students register and vote.*

We should make every effort to increase voter participation by making voter registration and the act of voting simple and accessible to all eligible voters. Unfortunately, many eligible Maryland voters, especially young Marylanders, are not voting.

Voting serves as a building block to more active involvement in civic life. In Maryland PIRG's 45-year history of working to register students to vote and running non-partisan voter registration drives, we have found that most people we talk to want to and intend to participate in voting, but as new voters, they often struggle to navigate the voter registration system or forget they need to update their registration every time they move.

The coronavirus crisis compounded these issues. We saw that students were unable to update their voter registration or request absentee ballots online because they didn't have a Maryland State ID, and many students we worked with were unsure where to have their

Rishi Shah, Maryland PIRG Associate

[rshah@marylandpirg.org](mailto:rshah@marylandpirg.org)

ballots mailed since they weren't sure if their dorm would suddenly close. Military personnel who frequently move from state to state faced similar challenges.

Young people vote less frequently than the rest of the population. In 2018, [turnout of voters under 29 was at 36% compared to 53.4% of all eligible voters](#) turned out. In 2020, [about half of all eligible people under the age of 29 voted](#), compared to [two-thirds of all eligible voters](#). Moreover, [less than half of servicemembers voted](#). [Numerous studies](#) have shown that voting is habit forming, and people who vote are more likely to become habitual voters that participate in elections for the rest of their lives.

Studies show that [young people who are registered to vote turn out in high numbers, very close to the rate of older voters](#). The voter registration gap in young people is a driving force in low youth voter participation. In 2018, [only 54% of Marylanders aged 18-24 were registered to vote, compared to 66% of all Marylanders](#) over the age of 18.

In order to increase civic participation we need to help young people and military members get registered to vote and ensure they have the tools they need to turn out on Election Day. For example, Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) created a cross-campus coalition of staff, administration, faculty and students and put together a thorough voting action plan. As a result, MICA became the school with the highest voter registration rate in the country, with [95.2% of eligible students being registered to vote](#).

During the 2020 elections, Maryland PIRG students helped register and turn out thousands of University of Maryland students to vote. Election after election in states across the country, we have found that if we ask students to vote and help them navigate the system, they will.

We should reduce the barriers faced by young people trying to register to vote and go to the polls. The Voter Empowerment Act ensures that:

1. Military members can use their Department of Defense-issued ID, the Common Access Card, to register to vote online;
2. Local Boards of Elections will seek input from large residential institutional communities, including college campuses, nursing homes, and military installations, when they select polling locations;
3. Universities will post the link to the online voter registration form on the website students use to register for classes to keep it visible;
4. Public universities will have a student voter coordinator, who will take point on forming a plan to support student voter registration and ensure students have the information they need to register to vote and turn out.

Maryland should take this opportunity to step up and be a national leader on democracy issues. We can encourage first time and young voters, increase civic participation, and build a more functional democracy.

We respectfully request a favorable report.



**SB0283\_LWVMD\_FAV\_Jacquelyn Slade.pdf**

Uploaded by: Slade, Jacquelyn

Position: FAV

SB 283—Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

POSITION: Support

BY: Personal Testimony of Jacquelyn Slade, Carroll County Student

DATE: February 4, 2021

Thank you to the committee and Chair Pinsky for giving me the opportunity to share why SB 283 matters to me and to Senator Elfreth for introducing the bill.

My name is Jacquelyn Slade and I am a high school senior attending St. Paul's School for Girls in Baltimore MD who will be attending Johns Hopkins University this coming fall. I also am a member of the League of Women Voters and run my own initiative, VotEd, which seeks to educate young people on how to vote and empower them to become civically engaged in government processes.

When I first voted, I felt a sense of accomplishment and pride—that my voice was finally valued by my state and country. Putting my ballot in the mailbox was one of the best moments of the hectic year of 2020. I want to ensure that every student who has the right to vote is able to feel this same sense of pride and have their voice heard in their local elections.

Although Maryland has made great strides in making voter registration convenient, not all eligible voters are aware of the procedures for registering to vote, how to obtain an absentee ballot, or the times and locations for voting. As a student who will be attending college in Maryland in the fall at Johns Hopkins University, I will be facing the dilemma of whether to continue to be registered at my home address or to change my registration to my college address. Students from different areas of the country will be facing this dilemma on a much greater scale, and will have difficulty navigating these processes.

Voting is essential to civic engagement, but many of my high school classmates are not even aware they are eligible to register to vote. I personally run an initiative at my high school, St. Paul's School for Girls, called VotEd ([votedusa.com](http://votedusa.com)), which seeks to educate young people on voting processes and empower them to become civically engaged in our government. I have more often than not come across a classmate who doesn't know how they are able to vote, or is unaware of current events. In the process of running this initiative, I have had students ask me questions as simple as when election day even was. They were completely unaware of how the process worked. I even had a staff member approach me because she did not understand the process of early voting. With Mary PIRG, I participated in the Maryland Student Votes Conference and texted many of my friends about how to vote, and many of them were not aware that they were eligible to register at the age of 16. When I spoke about my voting initiative to my class, many of them were not aware of how our votes are even processed and counted—and admittedly I was not aware of how this process worked until I interned at the Carroll County Board of Elections this past fall. Many of these students were fully capable of succeeding in an AP US or World History class, yet they were unaware of how to actually make history by voting for who they believe represents their beliefs.

Unfortunately, many eligible Maryland voters, especially young Marylanders, are not voting. In 2018, over 72% of people between the ages of 18-24 did not vote in Maryland. Additionally, in

2018, only 54% of Marylanders aged 18-24 were registered to vote, compared to 66% of all Marylanders over the age of 18.

As an 18-year-old Carroll County resident, I found these numbers disappointing. For this reason, I established VotEd, as previously mentioned. The Maryland Senate has the opportunity to make sure the voices of young people such as myself are heard more strongly in our elections— by supporting the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act. The Voter Empowerment Act ensures that students and members of the military have the resources and information necessary to register and turn out to vote.

The LWVMD supports SB 283 because our mission is to encourage informed and active participation in government. I, as a member of the League of Women Voters of Maryland and a student in Carroll County Maryland, respectfully request you to vote “yes” for the Student Military and Voter Empowerment Act so that students such as myself have the resources they need to make their voices heard in our elections.

**SB0283.pdf**

Uploaded by: Spiegel, Jayson

Position: FAV

**Statement of Jayson L. Spiegel**  
**In Support of SB0283**  
**Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act**  
**January 26, 2021**

My name is Jayson Spiegel. I am a Gaithersburg resident and retired after 28 years commissioned service in the Army and Army Reserve. I am a former Executive Director of the Reserve Officers Association of America and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. I am responsible for social media activities of the Maryland Democratic Party Veterans Leadership Council. I am speaking in my personal capacity.

I urge the House of Delegates to pass SB0283, the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act. I start with the proposition that any action that increases access to the ballot box should be enacted.

To that end, SB0283 makes it easier for military members to register to vote online by using their Common Access Card (CAC) instead of a wet signature. This provision addresses the Department of Defense Federal Voter Assistance Program concern that it can be difficult for Service Members overseas to print out, sign and scan the necessary documents to register to vote. Many military voters do not serve near a Post Office or Embassy and, therefore, cannot easily register to vote in Maryland.

This legislation is particularly important now because a substantial number of Maryland National Guard Soldiers will deploy to the Middle East this spring and will remain overseas until well into 2022.

I want to thank Senator Elfreth for her leadership on this important issue and urge prompt passage of the bill.

This bill represents an important step in enhancing voter registration. In future legislation or legislative sessions, I urge you also to study and consider mechanisms to enhance the ability of overseas military personnel to vote, including electronic voting.

Thank you.

# **Testimon on SB283- College Coord - Opposed.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ennis, Ella

Position: UNF

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

Re: SB 283 – Student & Military Voter Empowerment – OPPOSE

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee.

I oppose SB 283. Colleges and Universities already have voter registration links on their portals for students to sign up for classes. There are ample opportunities for “Get out the Vote” efforts. SB 283 is unnecessary and it will be expensive to have a Voter Coordinator at every campus. The Fiscal Note on SB 283 indicates that it will cost between \$15,000 and \$100,000 PER INSTITUTION and can cause a budget mandate for local governments.

Only “recognized” groups will be allowed to participate. Colleges and Universities routinely do not recognize conservative or Republican or Pro-Life groups and discriminate against conservative speakers and events. This bill will allow “recognized” campus groups –usually liberal to leftist and Democrats to have an increasingly unfair advantage. They will receive financial and other support for their efforts.

Freedom of speech is being restricted on college campuses in the name removing mis-information or dis-information. To disagree with the far-left view of an issue is demonized as “hate speech”. We are seeing calls to revoke the earned degree of a graduate if they stand up for or challenge the results of any election or voice opinions not politically-correct by leftist views. Universities ought to be bastions of free speech not censorship.

All students’ rights should be respected. All campus groups should be treated equally. SB 283 does nothing to protect the rights of free expression.

Please give SB 283 an Unfavorable Report.

Sincerely,  
Ella Ennis  
P.O. Box 437  
Port Republic, MD 20676  
E-mail: [eee437@comcast.net](mailto:eee437@comcast.net)

# **SB283 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 283 - 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 Reports on SB 283.

SB 283 seems to be a solution looking for a problem. There are plenty of opportunities and ways for college students to register to vote and then to vote during elections. This bill will create more work for both local board of elections as well institutions of higher learning and military recruiting offices.

Our college students are not stupid and do not need to be treated as if they are. You can register to vote online (and I would imagine that every college student is literate in navigating the Internet) and you can apply to vote with an absentee ballot if you do not have transportation to get to the polls. In our current environment where costs are rising higher everyday and income is not, instituting unnecessary and expensive changes currently is unwarranted. The coronavirus pandemic has put a huge financial strain on our universities and colleges as well as on our government finances. Mandating that these schools add additional staff or assign additional duties to current staff and additional costs to implement this program seems like an excessive burden at this time.

In conclusion, the members of the Maryland Federation of Republican Women strongly oppose SB 283 and ask for an Unfavorable Report.

Thank you,

*Diana D Waterman*

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**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**Letter of Information**

**Submitted by  
Bernie Sadusky, Executive Director  
February 4, 2021**

**Bill: SB 283-** Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges is grateful to the sponsor of this legislation for recognizing our concerns expressed in testimony last year concerning SB 647. MACC supports continuing efforts to facilitate our students' ability to vote, but our priority continues to be the upholding of academic standards to ensure that our institutions meet national and state accreditation requirements.

SB 283 requires our institutions to implement a student voting plan that incorporates a policy which would allow students to be excused from class to vote. Many of our students, particularly in allied health programs, are required to participate in a minimum number of instructional minutes in clinical rotations with local employers. Missing critical class time impacts the learning environment, and in the case of clinical rotations, may be contrary to employer policies.

Unlike our four-year partners where most students live on campus, community college students often travel significant distances from their homes to attend classes and their polling locations are far from campus. Excusing a student from class to vote will result in some students missing several required classes as they travel to and from distant polling places.

Given the accessibility of early voting, absentee voting and mail-in ballots in Maryland it makes sense to direct students toward these alternatives instead of negatively impacting their classroom participation. SB 283 presently requires a student voting plan which includes plans for dissemination of information about the process and deadlines for requesting and returning a ballot by mail, as well as the locations and dates for early voting. These efforts will give students every opportunity to vote without missing critical class or required clinical participation. We request that SB 283 be amended as follows:

**AMENDMENT 1**

**On page 8, beginning with line 19 (V) delete the words**

**(V) A POLICY ALLOWING A STUDENT TO BE EXCUSED FROM CLASS OR ABSENT FROM A JOB WITH THE INSTITUTION FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 2 HOURS FOR THE PURPOSE OF VOTING ON ELECTION DAY,**

**IF THE STUDENT DOES NOT HAVE 2 HOURS OF CONTINUOUS TIME OUT OF CLASS OR OFF FROM A JOB WITH THE INSTITUTION DURING THE TIME THE POLLS ARE OPEN ON ELECTION DAY;**

Community colleges are known as democracy's colleges for our uniquely American commitment to provide universal access to postsecondary education. As part of our mission, we prepare students for economic prosperity and to become active participants in their communities. Voter registration and participation by our students is important and will be strengthened by the requirements of SB 283.

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges and the Maryland Chief Student Affairs Officers recommend passage of this bill with the proposed amendment, and we thank you for your consideration.