

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.