

February 18, 2021

**Testimony on SB0340**  
**Election Law - Offenses Related to Voting- Penalties**  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Ways and Means**

**Position: Unfavorable**

Common Cause Maryland opposes HB 694 which would alter the circumstances under which an individual is not qualified to be a registered voter, to include those accused of attempting to double vote.

On September 17, 1787, a group of forward thinking individuals met together and signed one of the most important documents known to those of the free world. The U.S Constitution, in its 14th amendment granted full citizenship rights to all men born or naturalized in the United States. One of these rights was voting. Voting is celebrated as the most fundamental form of civic participation in a democracy, a means by which all voices are counted on an equal basis. But voting conspiracy theories and disinformation threaten that right and undermine confidence in the integrity of our election.

It's important to note that legislation of this nature aims to solve an issue that doesn't exist – voter fraud. In numerous studies, virtually no voter fraud was found. Fraud is rare and many instances of alleged fraud are instead mistakes by voters or election officials. In one study, a Loyola Law School professor found 31 instances involving allegations of voter impersonation out of 1 billion votes cast in U.S. elections between 2000 and 2014. Another study by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University Law School found many reports of people voting twice or ballots being cast on behalf of dead people were largely the result of clerical errors that suggested wrongdoing when none had occurred.

In Maryland, our election system is designed to prevent double voting. The State Board of Elections uses electronic poll books that track voters that have already voted. The poll books help transfer voter information to ensure that double voting doesn't occur. In the instances where a voter has already voted a ballot, the voter will be asked to vote provisionally if the attempt to vote again.

When the State Board of Elections does identify a case where a voter attempts to vote more than once, that information is shared with the proper authorities and the voter, if found guilty, may be subject to a fine or imprisonment.

Common Cause Maryland supports a robust, secure election system that encourages maximum participation among Marylanders. HB 694 does nothing to advance those goals, and instead aims to disenfranchise voters. We urge an unfavorable report.