

Committee: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Bill Number: House Bill 1047

Title: Mail-In Voting Enhancement Act

Hearing: April 1, 2021

Position: Support

Planned Parenthood of Maryland supports *House Bill 1047 – Mail-In Voting Enhancement Act*. This bill will provide clarity and accessibility to mail-in-voters by requiring the State Board of Elections to ensure that drop boxes are available prior to and during an election and that there is accessible information concerning the status of a voter’s absentee ballot.

In addition to being the top provider of reproductive health care in the state, Planned Parenthood of Maryland (PPM) has built a robust outreach program. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, PPM registered voters in all of its health center waiting rooms and at more than 100 community events per year. During the COVID-19 pandemic, PPM joined the Everyone Votes Maryland coalition in reaching out to voters to provide registration and ballot access information. Among the most common questions received during this work was information about delivery of ballots to the voter, and reassuring voters that their vote would be counted.

The provisions of additional dropboxes and enhanced ballot tracking in HB 1047 would address some of the most common concerns we heard from patients and community members, specifically the importance of having their voices heard during pandemic restrictions. Going forward, we feel strongly that these provisions will increase participation in our elections, a key feature of a healthy democracy.

We ask for a favorable vote on this legislation. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Suhani Chitalia at (240) 506-9325 or schitalia@policypartners.net.