

Testimony of The National Vote at Home Coalition In Support of Maryland's SB 683

Thank you Chair Pinsky and committee members for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 683. The National Vote at Home Coalition (NVAHC) is pleased to join local leaders in support of this measure with some proposed technical amendments that focus on more seamless implementation and are grateful for your time and attention. NVAHC is a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to making sure every American can vote in secure, safe, accessible, and equitable elections by expanding vote-at-home systems in all 50 states.

Currently in Maryland, voters that want to vote absentee must apply for an absentee ballot for every single election. Not only is this a burden on voters, it's also an expensive administrative burden on local election officials: they must process all requests election after election, year after year from many of the same voters. This duplication of effort wastes vital resources that could be directed elsewhere.

Creating a permanent absentee status will benefit both voters and election officials. Using this single sign-up option, voters will be mailed a ballot for every election and won't have to keep track of a variety of deadlines in order to receive a ballot and participate. We believe deeply in giving voters more options to cast their votes in a way that is convenient for them and this bill does exactly that.

Election officials, on the other hand, will save the time and money they might have otherwise spent processing absentee ballot requests for voters who regularly vote absentee. Our organization estimates that it costs on average \$1 for an office to process an individual absentee ballot request. By creating a permanent list, if only half of all mail voters from the 2020 general election signed up to vote absentee again, Maryland could save \$1.6 million each election cycle by simply eliminating duplicate requests for each election and sending out absentee ballots from an ongoing list rather than processing individual requests. Furthermore, as more voters register to vote by mail (as typically happens when mail ballots become more accessible), the pressure placed on election officials at in-person voting locations on election day will be reduced.

We applaud the thought and consideration put into SB 683 to build upon the successes of 2020. We are glad to lend our support as the bill continues through the process and look forward to working with the legislature to refine the details with technical amendments in a working group or subcommittee to make sure that processes work for both election officials and the voters they work so hard to serve.