

Testimony of The National Vote at Home Coalition In Support of Maryland's HB 1047

Thank you Chair Pinsky and committee members for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1047. The National Vote at Home Coalition is pleased to join local leaders in support of this measure and are grateful for your time and attention.

After their debut last year, voters and election officials have spoken: drop boxes were a massive success. It's not a wonder why: research¹ has shown that mail voters who vote by drop box are more confident that their vote will reach officials in time to be counted. Drop boxes can also save the state significant expense by dramatically reducing the amount spent on return postage for ballots.

We are grateful this bill makes sure that the distribution of boxes is equitable, accessible, and in service for enough time before the election. Further, this bill increases security by requiring video surveillance of drop boxes while minimizing cost increases by allowing boxes to be placed inside in areas that already have video surveillance. These basic access considerations are important to make sure that all voters have the options they need to make sure that their voices are heard.

We are also very supportive of the processes prescribed by this bill to create transparency for voters. Giving voters the ability to see basic information about the status of their ballot is an excellent way to increase the confidence of the electorate and increase participation.

Last year in an effort to reduce the number of rejected ballots the state worked hard to implement temporary processes and to create a robust cure process, no doubt contributing to Maryland's incredible progress of decreasing its ballot rejection rate by more than 45% since 2016, and its absentee rejection rate by more than 80%² This bill codifies that cure process into law, notifying

¹ 2018 paper [Do Drop Boxes Improve Voter Turnout? Evidence from King County, Washington](#)

² Based on 2020 total ballot rejection rate of 0.24% (from rejected [mail](#), [provisional](#), and [total turnout](#)) and 2016 ballot rejection rate of 0.47% (from [EAVS](#) data ((B13a+E1d+C4b) / F1a)) for total rejections, and 2016 absentee rejection rate of 1.43% from [EAVS](#) data ((B13a+C4b) / [total absentee returned](#))) and 2020 absentee rejection rate of 0.24% (from rejected and returned [mail](#))

VOTE HOME

March 2021

voters when a correctable error is found with their ballot envelope and giving them the chance to fix it.

Maryland has made great strides in expanding access and options to voters and we urge this committee to support HB 1047 to codify and build upon the successes of 2020's election reforms.

Update with amendments: <https://legiscan.com/MD/drafts/HB1047/2021>

Going to Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair of the committee is Sen Paul G. Pinsky

Notes on changes:

Adds

- absentee application to online tracking
- requires SBOE make chain of custody procedures for drop boxes
- makes messing with drop boxes a felony
- requires 24/7 video surveillance of drop boxes, not only "when feasible"

Removes:

- defining drop boxes as "outdoor"
- gets rid of requiring voters know "time" (rather than just date) when steps happen for tracking, as well as requirements that tracking system also report estimated delivery date and whether ballot returned as undeliverable
- Gets rid of requiring
- Adds that ballot cure must be accessible