

To: The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman
and Members of the
Education, Health and Environment Committee
Senate of Maryland
Annapolis, Maryland

Dear Chairman and Committee Members,

RE: SB 29 – Elections by Mail – OPPOSE

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for Elections by Mail legislation.

I strongly oppose SB 29– Elections by Mail. Advocates of Elections by Mail have pointed to the wide spread use of mail-in ballots in 2020 as evidence that this process is very popular. I don't think this process was so popular. The 2020 election forced many people to vote by mail because less than 1/4 of polling places were open for voting. If you chose to vote in person you had to wait for 2 hours or more because of the reduction of the number of polling places. Real and media-heightened fear over the COVID 19 virus pushed people to vote by mail.

SB 29 would have ballots mailed to all persons listed on the voters' rolls. Voters' Lists in all jurisdictions are not updated regularly. Voters' rolls contain many names of individuals that are no longer eligible to vote including those who have moved out of the district or the state; and, those of people who have died or become ineligible for other reasons. Mass-mailed ballots are subject to being lost in the mail or tampered with. The ballots can be "harvested" by removing them from mail boxes or from trash cans, particularly in multi-family housing communities. Vote harvesting groups can unfairly pressure voters, particularly the elderly or very young voters to vote for a specific candidate or slate of candidates or to allow them to return the ballots or even "help" them fill out their ballots. According to the State Board of Elections signature verification is not required on mail-in ballots.

When a voter votes at their Polling Place on Election Day or during Early Voting their ballot is completely secret and their ability to vote for the candidates of their choice is protected. They know their ballot is counted because they place the ballot in the collator. They have no such assurance with an election by mail. U.S. Mail delivery has become much less reliable and adding millions of "mail-in" ballots will flood the system and put delivery of ballots at risk.

Marylanders expect to know election results on election night or the following day. Delays in vote tabulations for days or weeks reduces confidence in the election results. The canvassing of ballots in elections-by-mail is prolonged over weeks. "Elections by mail" are much less secure and more susceptible to vote manipulation or leaking of the total votes tallied for a candidate to date while ballots are still being mailed.

Maryland has long had poll-watchers observe the vote counting for absentee ballots. It is very difficult to have volunteer poll-watchers available to observe vote counting over several weeks. In the 2020 election no poll watchers were allowed to observe the counting of mailed ballots in person.

In-person elections at all polling places on one Election Day have worked for hundreds of years. The system isn't broken and doesn't need to be "fixed" by elections by mail.

Please give SB 29 an unfavorable Report.

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