

Walee Attia  
Testimony for SB283  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs (EHEA) committee  
Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021  
Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

Hello, my name is Walee Attia and I reside in Baltimore City. I am a sophomore at Johns Hopkins University. I would first like to thank Chair Pinsky and the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs committee for the opportunity to share why this issue is important. I would also like to thank Senator Elfreth for introducing this bill.

It has long been asked of younger people including college students to become more engaged in the voting process and making their voices heard. Encouraging civic engagement and voter turnout strengthens our democracy, an effort that should not be a partisan issue. Ensuring that resources and information are provided is a necessary step in enabling more students to vote. The Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act helps make voting as accessible as possible such as by allocating two-hour time windows for Maryland students to vote.

I know from experience that the voting registration process can seem difficult to navigate. Despite my excitement to turn 18 and be able to vote, I needed to reach out to my parents and other resources online to complete registration. Many of my friends did not vote at all because they did not have the resources to navigate the process themselves, or the time to figure it out during their busy schedules as college students. For many, registering to vote can be the first formal paperwork they complete on their own. The VEA will enable colleges to make voting as accessible as possible by having student voting coordinators and providing voter registration links where students register for courses.

I strongly support passing the Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act and hope all of you take this crucial step towards a stronger democracy as well. Thank you.