Subject: **Favorable Support for SB0271/HB0423**

To: **The Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Committee**

From: **Joel Zimba**

Contact: **Joel Zimba**

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Date: February 18, 2021

My name is Joel Zimba, and I am asking you to vote in favor of SB0271, a bill to restore the secret ballot to disabled voters, such as myself. I am tired of facing discrimination everytime I go to vote.

I usually vote at Margaret Brent Elementary School, 100 East 26th Street in Charles Village in Baltimore City. On February 4, 2020, I voted in the Special Congressional District 7 primary at my polling place. I arrived at 4:15 PM. I am blind. I thus cannot handmark a paper ballot. I need to use an accessible voting machine to mark my ballot privately and independently. I use the machine audio interface and tactile controls to view and mark my ballot. When I attempted to vote using the BMD at my precinct, the BMD was not reading my ballot aloud to me. The two poll workers at my polling place who assisted me could not independently determine why the ballot was not being read to me. After calling the technical support hotline for assistance, they learned that they had to select either the democratic or republican ballot before the ballot could be read aloud. Once they selected my ballot type, I was able to vote independently using the BMD. I had to wait about a half hour while the poll workers figured out how to correctly configure the BMD for me. It is obvious to me that very few voters used the BMD, therefore, my ballot could be associated with me and thus would not be secret. I had a similar experience in the 2018 primary when I was the only person who voted using the BMD. You must end this discrimination.

Please vote in favor of SB0271. I deserve the right to a secret ballot and to cast my vote independently and privately as you have.