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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE –  
IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 831  
ELECTION REFORM ACT OF 2021**

**March 3, 2021**

Get Money Out (GMOM) is an all-volunteer organization that was established eight years ago. We now have signed up more than 9,000 citizen supporters. We work in Maryland toward the goals that all citizens should have equal access to the ballot and an equal say in governance.

We believe that **SB 831** deserves support because it would advance nine important aspects of our election governance and processes in Maryland:

- Increases transparency by making the State and local election board meeting minutes detailed and searchable, and by including the agendas, memoranda, testimony, and previous minutes.
- Allows unaffiliated voters to affiliate with a party and vote in a primary during the early voting period. We would go further, but we approve of this intermediate step toward open primaries.
- Creates a debate commission with party-affiliated and independent members – some chosen at random from among applicants. The commission sets rules around the timing and broadcasting of the debates. Candidates for Governor, U.S. Senate, and Representative to Congress are required to participate in at least one debate sponsored by the Commission.
- Requires ballot questions and petitions to meet plain language standards.
- Establishes that all voters can vote in primaries to elect judges.
- Allows voters a reasonable process to cure errors in voters' mail-in ballot applications.
- Includes an important election security provision by restricting email ballot delivery as well as online ballot marking to limited populations that demonstrate the need for this type of access. This vital measure counters the existing threat in Maryland of a large-scale cyberattack targeting a group of voters in a primary or general election in order to tip the election to a favored candidate or ballot issue. Such an attack could happen fast and without warning, and the consequences of such an occurrence

would be quite severe – likely requiring a repeat election and further eroding public confidence in our democracy.

- Includes common-sense measures to protect mail-in ballot secrecy, including not displaying party affiliation.
- Defines “ballot drop box,” requires the boards of elections to specify and limit who can install drop boxes, and places a drop box at each early voting center. Voters in line before the deadline on election day must be allowed to deposit their ballots.
- To improve access to voting, establishes reasonable criteria for the geographic distribution of early voting centers and requires them to be open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm for all elections.

Several of these provisions have been put forward in other bills that we also support. Of all of them, we think that closing the security gap caused by Maryland’s uniquely vulnerable Internet ballot delivery and marking is the most vital. We also believe that the move toward open primaries is a small but important step toward lessening the partisan tension that is building throughout the nation. We hope that the Committee will be able to find a majority to move these reforms forward.