

SB 831 - Election Reform Act of 2021.pdf

Uploaded by: Antoine, Joanne

Position: FAV

March 3, 2021

**Testimony on SB 831
Election Reform Act of 2021
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland opposes SB 831, which provide a set of reforms aims at strengthening our elections and greater access to information regarding our elections. We take no position on the debate requirement and electronic ballot delivery method sections of this bill.

Circuit Court Judges – Nonpartisan Elections

Partisan politics have no place in judicial elections. We believe that judges are to be true to the law, but partisan elections get in the way of their being able to do that. Partisan elections open to the door to special interests to spend money influencing their elections and, once elected, the courts. This leads to judicial candidates who are on one side of an interest group or another which can continue through their time on the bench, especially when preparing for reelection.

Much of the respect and trust for the judicial system stems from the view that judges are independent. Partisan elections fail to accomplish that. Nominations become dependent on being sponsored by a political party which opens the door to criteria for the selection of judges other than their ability to neutrally apply the law. SB 831 would move towards an impartial judicial system that citizens can trust where citizens can trust, without regard to political party affiliation.

Ballot Drop Boxes

Drop boxes give voters a safe, secure method to return a vote-by-mail ballot that is controlled and operated by the local boards of election, without requiring voters to visit an in-person site or use of mail. SB 831 aims to make drop boxes a permanent staple in our elections. Similar to the previous election cycle, video surveillance or in-person security would be required. Election officials would also be required to collect ballots regularly.

SB 831 also goes to a step further to ensure voters who are in line to drop off a mail-in ballot using a secure drop box are still able to submit their ballot. During the 2020 primary, our nonpartisan election protection volunteers witnessed well over a hundred voters at multiple vote centers being turned away even when in line. At some location, there was no clear line as voters were just gathered near the box waiting to submit their ballot. In all of these instances, security locked the boxes right at 8pm and turned voters away. SB 831 would ensure they can still have their voice heard in our elections, similar to those in line to vote in-person.

Open Meetings

For too many citizens, the work done by local boards of elections is a distant and often undecipherable series of activities. Many Marylanders are unable to go to meeting locations in person but have a strongly vested interest in the policies and decisions being made by these agencies. For those who can attend meetings, they are often don't have access to meeting agendas and at times travel only to be met with closed sessions. SB 831 aims to utilize technology that makes information in all its forms readily available.

Streaming video and online access to meeting materials are easy and efficient ways to enhance Marylanders' access to agencies throughout the State. The technology to live-stream is inexpensive, widespread, and allows all Marylanders to participate. Archiving the streams and meeting materials ensure those who are unable to watch the live stream have access to the footage. SB 831 would ensure access and transparency to local boards of elections, ensuring Marylanders are able to have access to meetings where decision made will impact our future elections.

Unaffiliated Voters

Currently, registered unaffiliated voters who would like to register under a recognized political party to participate in Maryland's closed primary process must do so 21 days before the election. However, unregistered voters may show up in the week before the election, register, and choose a party affiliation. The disparity created by the deadline for unaffiliated voters is arbitrary, confusing, and an unnecessary burden.

Over 766,000 voters in Maryland are currently registered as unaffiliated. Most of those voters register as unaffiliated to express their disapproval of the party that they feel should represent them, but few are aware that such a registration could affect their ability to participate in Maryland's primaries. SB 831 would allow for more voters to have a more meaningful impact on the democratic process in a way that would not materially impact the state's current preference for closed primaries.

Plain Language Requirements & Ballot Layout

The language used in ballot questions and, at time, petitions, still favor the college-educated who represent a minority of the U.S. population. According to the Census Bureau, only 31 percent of people 25 or older have a bachelor's degree or higher education level. Specifically, in Maryland only 47% of people are college educated. Meaning that at least 53% of people are in jeopardy of not being able to understand what is written in a ballot question. This leads to voters being unsure of how they voted on a question or skipping the questions completely because they are just not sure what they are being asked. It is important that voters are conscious of the decisions they are making. It is also important that voters don't feel left out of policymaking by intimidating ballot language.

SB 831 acknowledges the realities of the educational make up of our state and country. Measures should be taken to make voting on ballot measures and participating in the petition process more equitable for everyone. Requiring these materials be written at a 6th grade level of reading comprehension will inevitably lead to less confusion for voters during elections.

SB 831 also ensures voters a voter can view a candidate for a single office on the same page and screen. Also, that voters using an electronic voting device can hear all candidates names before selecting their choice(s) – creating a more fair election process for those running for office.

Mail-in Voting Materials

While we agree that we should be exploring ways to ensure ballot privacy for voter choosing to vote by mail, we should be taking a look at our materials overall. As we saw during the 2020 election, the use of multiple envelopes can cause confusion even though it is a provision available to address voter privacy – separating identity from the vote.

The Center for Civic Design has also proposed improved envelope designs, those designs that have been shared with the State Board of Elections. The proposed designs address privacy – ultimately eliminating the need for use of multiple envelopes – but also ensure these materials are easily identifiable to voters when arriving by mail. The proposed designs also improve instructions provided on these materials, making them more clear and easier to understand. We encourage the committee to look at ways to improve the overall design, privacy, and instructions included with mail-in voting ballots and materials.

Early Voting Locations

Early voting was established to drive participation and make voting more convenient. While the program has been a success and has seen a surge in the number of Marylanders voting early, we are leaving those with tight work schedules and family obligations behind. SB 831 would provide individuals easy access to early voting sites, eliminating the barriers of time and distance for travel for many voters.

Currently, early voting centers open at 8am during presidential general elections, but only open at 10am during gubernatorial general elections providing less time for voters to cast a ballot in races that are just as important. SB 831 would provide greater access to early voting by changing the opening time to 7am for all elections and shift our early voting calendar – providing access to voting during the peak of Get Out the Vote, weekend before Election Day, where many voters are activated.



SB 831 would also ensure most registered voters are located within at least 5 miles of a locations. Last session, we heard from voters in Montgomery County and Baltimore City who reported long commutes, especially for voter who rely on public transportation. The barrier has a disparate impact on the elderly, disabled folks, people of color, and the immigrant community. Ensuring these locations are closer to voters begin to address this inequity in our election process.

Preprocessing of Mail-In Ballots

Preprocessing covers an assortment of processes that occur before a mail-in ballot is ready for counting. This typically includes scanning ballots into the system and marking them as “received,” verifying or checking for the presence of a signature, identifying any errors with a ballot that can be “cured” by the voter, and removing ballots from their envelopes in preparation for counting.

As more Maryland voters begin to utilize the mail-in voting, allowing for the preprocessing of ballots will ensure elections officials are not overwhelmed with mail ballots after Election Day. The increase in time to process mail-in ballots also allows for results to be made available much sooner. SB provides a crucial first step to implementing other mail-in voting best practices being considered this session.

Curing

More than 38,000 mail-in ballots were rejected in the 2020 election cycle. While majority of these ballots were rejected during the primary and mostly due to late receipt, many of these ballots could have been accepted with a clear curing process in place.

When mail-in ballots are received in a timely manner or preprocessing of ballots allowed, election officials are able to check for the presence of a signature and identify any errors with a ballot that can be “cured” by a voter. This process provides for a window of time in which voters can correct their mistake for reasons varying from missing signatures to identification to ensure their vote still counts. Some local boards of election have put together an unofficial process to try and contact voters when there is an issue, but these efforts are not consistent and typically rely on election official’s willingness to contact voters as we saw during the 2020 election. SB 831 aims to establish an official process where voters are notified of a problem and provided with an opportunity to correct the problem. This process will ensure those who intend to vote are able to have their voices heard in that election.

We urge a favorable report.

GMOM_SB831test_030321.pdf

Uploaded by: Cooper, Charlie

Position: FAV



Board of Directors

Charlie Cooper, President
Doug Miller, Vice President
Angad Singh, Treasurer
Joseph Adams, M.D.

Diamonte Brown
Renaud Brown
Tina Coplan
Hank Prenskey

Sheila Ruth
Wylie Sawyer
Ashley Sparks
Martin Wulfe

**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.

SB831_ Election Reform Act of 2021 Testimony (3-1-

Uploaded by: Kagan, Sen. Cheryl

Position: FAV

CHERYL C. KAGAN
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Vice Chair
Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Joint Audit Committee
Joint Committee on Federal Relations



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3134 · 410-841-3134
800-492-7122 Ext. 3134
Fax 301-858-3665 · 410-841-3665
Cheryl.Kagan@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB831: Election Reform Act of 2021

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Wednesday, March 3, 2021, 1pm

The strength of our election system was tested last year by both the Coronavirus pandemic and a U.S. President who sought to overturn the results of a free and fair election. Although the 2020 election was contentious and divisive, it caused more Americans than ever to focus on the details of voting. To address some of these key details, I have introduced the Election Reform Act of 2021. As you will see below, most portions of this essentially curative legislation are modest but important improvements-- neither partisan nor ideological.

- **Increasing Transparency for the State Board of Elections (SBE) & Local Boards of Elections (LBE) (amplifying 2020 law [SB363/](#)[HB421](#))**
 - Because SBE was not live video-streaming meetings; posting agendas 48-hours in advance; and notifying the public about changes to the meeting dates, I filed a complaint with the Open Meetings Compliance Board.
 - SB831 would require the timely posting of meeting materials; voting on proposed minutes; and adding elections boards to the Open Meetings Compliance Board's jurisdiction.
 - Greater transparency will increase public confidence in our elections systems.
- **Creating Consistent Voting Hours**
 - Opening hours vary from election to election, confusing voters.
 - Every day that there is voting, every location would have the same operating hours from 7am - 8pm.
- **Expanding the Number of Early Voting Days**
 - Early Voting would be extended by a week (from 2020's eight days) in order to include two weekends and the day before Election Day for a total of 15 days.
 - This reflects federal legislation ([H.R. 1](#)).
- **Exempting the Local Boards of Elections from the Definition of "Majority Party"**
 - In Maryland law, the word "majority" represents the current Governor's political party. This applies to all boards and commissions. SB831 proposes to change this solely for our local election boards.
 - The "majority" on an LBE should reflect the plurality of registered voters in that County, according to the most recent statewide election.
 - [This is similar to [SB58](#) proposed by Senator Ellis this year.]

- **Mandating Candidate Debates**
 - This bill proposes to create an independent Debate Commission. Debates allow voters to learn about their choices before casting a ballot.
 - This bill would create parameters and a timetable for public debates before both the Primary and General elections.
- **Simplifying Ballot Language (Passed Senate unanimously in 2020 - [SB56/HB140](#))**
 - Ballot questions are written using complex language that is hard to understand.
 - For example, the [2018 casino lockbox question](#) required more than 30 years of formal education to fully comprehend.
 - Consider federal Plain Writing Act guidelines when writing ballot initiatives at or below a sixth-grade level.
- **Establishing Geographically Accessible Early Voting Sites**
 - Early Voting Centers should be located in accessible locations.
 - At least 80% of voters should live within **five miles** of an Early Voting center in urban counties and within **10 miles** in rural counties (as defined in the code).
- **Using Ballot Drop Boxes at Early Voting Centers.**
 - Ballot drop boxes were very successful during the 2020 election.
 - Each Early Voting Center must have a ballot drop box.
- **Protecting Voter Privacy**
 - Some voters may be reluctant to use mail-in voting if they believe election workers can see their political party affiliation or how they voted.
 - A privacy sleeve would be supplied with the mail-in ballot that is sent to voters.
 - The bill would prohibit an LBE from rejecting a ballot because a voter neglected to use the privacy sleeve.
- **Allowing Local Boards to begin processing ballots 18 days before Election Day**
 - When the LBE cannot begin to process ballots until Election Day, the final results are delayed. Also, voters cannot get timely notice of problems with their ballot envelopes or oaths.
 - LBEs would be authorized to begin processing ballots 18 days before Election Day, but ballots could not be tabulated until Election Day. (This is the number of days recommended by MAEO-- the MD Association of Election Officials.)
- **Standardizing Curing Procedures**
 - 35,788 [ballots were rejected](#) in Maryland during the 2020 Presidential Primary.
 - The LBEs in all 24 jurisdictions would follow consistent procedures for notifying voters of problems with their ballot envelopes or oaths and given the opportunity to fix them.
 - By notifying voters through first-class mail **AND** email, phone call, and/or text message, we would hope that their ballots could be accepted and counted.
- **Expanding “Ballot Access” (2019 - [SB489/HB530](#))**
 - Voters who register for the first time can select their party affiliation and cast a partisan ballot.
 - Under current law, voters who want to change their party affiliation are required to do so before the registration deadline of 21 days before Election Day.

- This bill allows an unaffiliated voter to choose a party and cast a partisan ballot in the same way that someone can register to vote for the first time and participate in a Primary Election.
- Unaffiliated voters who choose to affiliate with a party during a primary shall use Ballot Marking Devices (BMDs) to cast their ballots. This will ensure there are enough of each ballot design while also supporting the use of BMDs in each precinct, offering increased privacy for voters with disabilities.
- **Including Circuit Court Judges on all Ballots**
 - Voters who choose not to affiliate with a political party are deprived of the opportunity to vote for (nonpartisan) Circuit Court judges in the primary.
 - The bill would require the names of Circuit Court incumbents and challengers to appear on all primary ballots, regardless of whether the voter is affiliated.
- **Mandating Precinct-level Reporting**
 - Lumping all the mailed ballots together without sorting by precinct can make post-election audits and recounts more expensive and time-consuming.
 - Publishing precinct-level data helps detect anomalies or fraud. All five states that have established Vote-by-Mail systems (Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah, and Washington) use precinct-level reporting.
 - LBEs should report all election results by precinct.
- **Listing All Candidates on the Same Ballot Marking Device (BMD) Screen**
 - When the names of candidates for one office appear on more than one screen and voters must click “next” on their BMD to see the full list, they may not understand that all of the candidates are standing for one office.
 - To avoid confusion and under-voting, all candidates for the same office should appear on the same screen to the extent the technology allows.
- **Prohibiting Fake Ballot Drop Boxes**
 - Voters cannot be assured that their ballots will be secured (24/7 video cameras) or counted if they use an unauthorized drop box.
 - Only Ballot Drop Boxes authorized by the SBE and the LBE are permissible.
- **Reduce the Use of Internet-delivered Ballots (2020 - [HB859](#) by Del. Alonzo Washington)**
 - Current law allows any registered voter to request an Internet-delivered ballot.
 - Internet ballots present challenges and obstacles for the voter (printer, envelope, stamp, etc.), resulting in a disproportionate shift to provisional ballots.
 - If returned, these home-printed ballots must be copied onto an official ballot by a bipartisan team of election judges, taking staff time, costing money, and creating the opportunity for human error.
 - This change would restrict this delivery option to those who truly need it. (This would include veterans, overseas voters, college students, and people with disabilities.)

As amended, SB831 addresses a wide array of 17 topics that will improve Maryland’s election system and voter confidence.

I urge a favorable report with amendments on SB831.

LWVMD testimony - SB 831 - Election Reform Act of

Uploaded by: Millenson, Janet

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SB 831 – Election Reform Act of 2021

POSITION: Favorable

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents

DATE: March 3, 2021

The League of Women Voters of Maryland, representing 1500 members across the state, believes our election system should be fair, accessible, equitable, and increase voter participation. SB 831, the Election Reform Act of 2021, proposes many improvements that the League supports, including the following:

- **Open meetings materials made available 48 hours in advance:** This would greatly enhance transparency and benefit everyone who cares about how our government makes decisions.
- **Circuit court judge contests to appear on unaffiliated ballots during primary elections:** The League supports this sensible proposal to treat nonpartisan circuit court judge contests the same way nonpartisan school board contests are treated — by being listed on all primary ballots (Democratic, Republican, and Unaffiliated). Unaffiliated registrations are increasing faster than party registrations, and these voters deserve a voice also.
- **Limit internet delivery of ballots to UOCAVA voters and others who truly need it:** Internet delivery of ballots should be reserved for UOCAVA voters, people with certain disabilities, and others who require this option. Such ballots must be manually duplicated by the local Board of Elections in order to be scanned, an extra step that's time-consuming and potentially compromises accuracy and security. An unprecedented flood of internet-delivered ballots in the 2020 General Election led to an enormous processing burden on the LBEs and slowed down the canvass because many voters chose this option without realizing the consequences.
- **Remove party affiliation and other identifying information from ballot return envelopes:** This simple design change will reassure voters concerned about privacy. Scannable barcodes contain the same essential information in machine-readable form.
- **Set standards for early voting center locations:** Early voting is popular and increases voter turnout. Objective, consistent guidelines would make siting decisions fairer and improve accessibility. Preferably, though, early voting should end no later than the Saturday before Election Day. The local Boards of Elections need time to switch out equipment, update the electronic pollbooks, and provide a brief respite for election workers.
- **Start the absentee ballot canvass before Election Day:** Although the actual tally of ballots does not take place until polls close on Election Day, it makes sense to start the preliminary processing of ballot return envelopes in advance, as was done in 2020. This allows more time for "curing" ballots, i.e., contacting voters who failed to sign the oath and enabling them to remedy the problem before the canvass ends. Note: The wording on pp. 26-27 ("If an absentee ballot contains an error that would invalidate the ballot... [the local Board of Elections shall contact the voter]") should be rewritten to refer to errors on (or in) an absentee ballot *envelope*. Ballots themselves cannot be traced to a particular voter.

(continued)

- **If two ballots are received from the same voter, count the one that arrives first:** A similar provision was adopted in 2020 on an emergency basis and should be made permanent. It is much fairer than the previous practice of discarding both ballots, which can disenfranchise voters unnecessarily.
- **Absentee ballots may not be rejected simply because of a non-standard or incomplete return envelope:** Official return envelopes are sometimes accidentally misplaced, recycled, or discarded. That should not disqualify an otherwise acceptable ballot from being counted.

In summary, the League of Women Voters urges a favorable report on SB 831, the Election Reform Act of 2021.

Election Reform Act21 cr.pdf

Uploaded by: Reed, Clark

Position: FAV

March 1, 2021

SB0831 ELECTION REFORM ACT OF 2021

COMMITTEE: EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
POSITION: FAVORABLE

I support SB0831, specifically its requirements under 9-102 (D)(1)(VI) that all candidates for a single office appear on the same page or screen of their ballot.

As a candidate for local office in 2015, my name appeared on the second page of an electronic ballot due to a large number of candidates running for office. As in any election, there were likely several reasons for not winning office that year, but no one who runs should lose votes because their names cannot be easily found on the ballot.

While there was a button to advance to the second listing of candidates, some voters (including elderly ones), thought it was inconspicuous or confusing. The remedy is not larger buttons but better ballots. If every candidate for a specific office is listed together, voters can see all of their options, not just some of them.

I urge you to pass SB0831 to strengthen our democracy and enable all candidates - regardless of their last name – to receive equal treatment on all of Maryland's ballots.

Thank you.

SINCERELY,
CLARK A. REED

SB0831_Maryland PIRG_Emily Scarr_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Scarr, Emily

Position: FAV

Maryland PIRG

Testimony for SB 831

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Election Reform Act of 2021

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Maryland PIRG is a state based, non-partisan, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state and a student chapter at the University of Maryland College Park. For forty five years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society.

We support SB831 to improve the administration of our elections systems. There are some aspects of the bill that we have not taken a position on related to party affiliation and voting.

This bill includes policies responding to increased usage of early voting and voting by mail. These include: allowing voters to fix mistakes on their mail-in ballot request forms, continuing to provide drop boxes that voters can place their mail-in ballots in, extending the operating hours of early vote centers, and creating a curing process for mail-in ballots.

This bill also increases the amount of clear and transparent information provided to voters by increasing both the amount of information the State Board of Elections provides about its meetings and by mandating more debates between candidates running for office.

Finally the bill makes adjustments to elections administration that increase voter privacy and function of our elections by expanding use of privacy sleeves, enabling early processing of ballots and requiring precinct level reporting.

Improvements to early voting and vote by mail:

More Access to Early Voting Centers: This bill increases hours of early voting centers throughout Maryland to be between at 7 AM, 3 hours earlier than their current opening time and shifts the days of early voting to be the eight days immediately preceding Election Day. For many Marylanders, early voting centers provide necessary flexibility for those who have work or other obligations on Election Day. **Expanding the hours will increase access to voting to meet the needs of voters, which makes good sense.**

Fixing mistakes on a mail-in ballot application: If a mail-in ballot application has an error on it that would invalidate the application, this bill requires local Boards of Elections to notify voters within 3

days of identifying that error. This process allows voters to then correct the error and return a fixed mail-in ballot application by the deadline. **Enabling voters to fix errors on their mail-in ballot application is common sense. An error in paperwork should not prevent a voter from participating in elections.**

Making drop boxes permanent: SB831 has local Boards of Elections designate locations to place ballot drop boxes for future elections. Ballot drop boxes should be placed throughout the state in advance of each election. They are [safe](#) and [secure](#) ways for voters to return their mail-in ballots, and they're popular with voters. [Over one million Maryland voters used dropboxes](#) in the November general election. This bill requires local boards to designate the location of drop boxes in their counties and requires each early voting site have a drop box. It also ensures anyone in line to use a drop box on Election Day by 8pm be allowed to drop their ballot. Other bills considered by this committee are mandating a minimum number of early drop boxes.

Drop boxes make sense for voters who received their mail-in ballot late, are concerned about meeting the postmark deadline, want to give their ballot directly to the BOE, or don't trust the postal system. And as an added benefit, since Maryland's mail in voting envelopes are postage paid, drop boxes also [save local governments significant amounts of money](#) because return postage is not required.

Include a Mail-In Ballot Curing Process: Ballot curing is a process when election officials reach out to voters and give them a chance to fix, or "cure," any fixable issues with their submitted mail-in ballot. This legislation establishes a procedure for curing erroneous mail-in ballots. Of all rejected mail-in ballots in Maryland during the general election, [42% of these ballots were rejected because they were not signed by the voter, totalling to 1,552 total rejected ballots](#). During the June primary, [3,290 ballots were rejected because of a lack of signature](#).

When possible, voters should be alerted to a missed signature and be given the opportunity to fix it. Nobody should lose their vote because they forgot to sign a piece of paper.

Increasing information available to the public:

More State Board of Elections Transparency: SB831 requires the State Board of Elections to post all materials - including agendas, memoranda, written testimony, and proposed minutes from previous open meetings - onto its website in advance of the meeting. **Government agencies should be as transparent as possible to members of the public. Making more information from SBE readily available and accessible to the public will enable more public engagement and participation and build faith in our elections' administration.**

Debate Requirement for Governor, U.S. Senate, and U.S. House: As amended, this legislation mandates that publicly financed candidates running for Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Comptroller, or a U.S. Congress have to engage in at least one public debate before the primary and general election, unless they're running unopposed. **With the explosion of corporate and super PAC [spending on political advertisements](#), it's more important than ever that the public has access to clean, unfiltered information about a candidate. Maryland PIRG supports debate requirements.**

Improving administration of elections.

Adding a privacy sleeve for mail in ballots makes good sense to reduce concerns of voter privacy. This bill creates the voluntary use of the sleeve, which is a smart solution to increase privacy without risking loss of votes due to voter confusion. Our ballots overall should be designed more clearly for voters, and Maryland PIRG supports legislation to improve our ballot design and instructions.

Enabling local boards of election to process ballots before Election Day is crucial as we see an increase in vote by mail both because it speeds up the timeline for results to be certified and because it enables ballot curing.

Finally, requiring precinct level reporting is smart policy because it increases transparency on our elections and strengthens our audit process.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

SB831_Neal Simon_FAV

Uploaded by: Simon, Neal

Position: FAV

Neal Simon
SB831: Election Reform Act of 2021

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Wednesday, March 3, 2021
Position: **FAVORABLE**

In 2018, I ran as an independent candidate for a U.S. Senate seat in Maryland, polling as high as 18 percent in the three-way race. Unaffiliated with any political party, I had one goal in mind-- to unite the country and to bring pragmatism back to Washington.

As an independent, I witnessed firsthand the perverse incentives that push candidates and lawmakers to ideological extremes. I saw the resistance of party leaders to sensible solutions to our nation's problems and watched elected officials prioritize loyalty to their political party over progress for the American people.

After losing the race to the incumbent Senator Ben Cardin, I wrote the [*Contract to Unite America: Ten Reforms to Reclaim our Republic*](#). Of those 10, several are included in whole or in part of Sen. Kagan's [SB831](#):

- Supporting increased ballot access for unaffiliated voters in Primaries;
- Making Circuit Court Judges nonpartisan; and
- Establishing candidate debates(perhaps the most important of them all).

Unaffiliated voters (also known as independents) made the conscious choice not to affiliate with a party because they don't believe they cleanly fit into either party. Unfortunately, Maryland has closed primaries, which means that independents cannot help narrow the field for either party. There may be a candidate who energizes some independents, but those voters would currently be excluded from closed primaries when they show up during Early Voting or on Election Day. This legislation allows those unaffiliated individuals who feel passionately about a candidate to change their party registration and cast a partisan ballot.

Elections for Circuit Court judges, which are nonpartisan, should not be held exclusively through partisan primaries. These elections should be held similar to races for the Board of Education, allowing any registered voter to cast a ballot for these important offices.

Finally, candidate debates should be mandated and available to the general public. It is time that democracy takes place in the open. If an independent candidate (such as I was) wants to run against a long-term incumbent, voters will benefit from seeing candidates share their vision and policy positions.

I extend great thanks to Senator Kagan for her leadership on these issues, and for consulting with me as she laid the framework for SB831. I **strongly encourage** the Committee to support these aspects of the bill.

SB831-SOVtestimony2021.pdf

Uploaded by: Wilson, Rebecca

Position: FAV



SB 831: Election Reform Act of 2021

Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

March 3, 2021

Position: FAVOR

Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

We support this excellent bill, which makes many improvements in our elections. While some of the provisions of this legislation are outside of our areas of expertise, we would like to highlight a few that fall within the scope of our organization's work.

1. It would increase the transparency of state and local boards of elections processes, including requiring the posting of meeting materials in advance of meetings and requiring the retention of meeting recordings. Posting of meeting materials in advance provides notice of the contents of the meeting with sufficient time for interested members of the public to sign up to comment and/or to submit written testimony before the meeting. Retention of recordings enables the public to hear the discussions that took place during the meetings, not just the summaries provided in the meeting minutes. At a time when public trust in government in general and in elections in particular is at an all-time low, increasing the transparency of government operations will help to restore confidence in our elections.
2. It would require public debates for candidates for Governor, US Senator, and US Representative, overseen by a debate commission to ensure fair and equitable access and procedures for candidates. This would enable voters to view candidates side by side and compare their answers to important questions.
3. It expands the days and hours available for early voting, which was highly successful during the 2020 elections. It also expands the use of drop boxes to ensure the secure and timely receipt of voted absentee ballots.
4. It establishes a "curing" process for both absentee ballot applications and absentee ballots themselves, so that voters could be notified about and correct errors that would cause an application or ballot to be rejected.
5. It reserves the electronic delivery of absentee ballots, as most other states do, for voters who need to receive their ballots via the internet. This would improve the security and privacy of Maryland's absentee voting and decrease the burden on local elections staff, who must hand-transcribe each voter-printed ballot onto an official ballot that can be read by the scanners that count the votes. In the 2020 general election, this processing caused MD to be among the last states to finish counting our absentee ballots despite being the earliest to begin processing them.

We urge you to return a favorable report on this important and timely bill.

Rebecca Wilson, Co-Director

SAVE our Votes: Secure, Accessible, Verifiable Elections for Maryland

rebecca@SAVEourVotes.org 202.601.8182

CSME MD Back-end AVR Testimony (2).pdf

Uploaded by: Anderson, Stephanie

Position: FWA

SB831 – Favorable With Amendments

The Center for Secure and Modern Elections (CSME) is a national organization dedicated to advancing pro-voter policies at the state level that modernize the voting process and ensure that every American, whether they are Democrat, Republican, or Independent, can have their voice heard. The Center for Secure and Modern Elections pursues policies and reforms at the state level in order to ensure an election process that is more efficient, accurate and secure.

CSME advocates for proposals such as Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) that save valuable time for election officials and save money for state governments, while ensuring that as many voters as possible can participate in our great democracy. AVR systems automatically register eligible voters and update voter registration information when people apply for or renew their driver's license or change their address. AVR is a common sense improvement to our registration process that uses modern technology to protect the security of our elections, make government more efficient, and ensure every eligible voter has an opportunity to have their voice heard on Election Day. CSME works to ensure that as many states as possible adopt AVR and that the process is implemented in a manner that is most effective for voters and election officials.

Why Transition from front-end to back-end

Maryland should upgrade its existing AVR system to a back-end system. A back-end AVR system would maximize effectiveness and security for voter registration at the MVA, and allow for expansion of AVR to Medicaid and other state agencies. Here's how the system works:

- Maryland currently uses a front-end registration system at the MVA. During the MVA transaction, AVR customers are given the option to affirmatively decline to register to vote or update an existing registration. Front end systems often feature opt-out rates up to 50%, which may reflect customers unnecessarily declining registration because they incorrectly believe their registration is up to date, because they are in a rush to leave the MVA, because they are confused, or because they trust themselves to register or make the update later and then never do. By contrast, back-end systems see opt out rates up to 5% but as low as 1%.
- Back-end AVR stops leaks in the pipeline of new registrants and updates. Under this bill, an unregistered adult who provides proof of U.S. citizenship (such as a passport) during a MVA transaction will automatically have their information passed to the local board office. If the person is eligible, the election official will complete the registration and send a notice offering the chance to either decline registration or affiliate with a political party. The person can return this notice with postage prepaid. Under SB 831, Maryland would also allow new back-end AVR registrants to affiliate with a party at the polls on the day of a primary election.



- Back-end AVR is the most efficient, effective, and secure system for registering new voters and updating existing registrations at the MVA and other state agencies. Colorado, Nevada, Oregon, Alaska, and Massachusetts have all adopted a form of back-end AVR.
- Back-end AVR also streamlines registration updates. Any existing registrant who provides new name or address information to the MVA will automatically have their voter registration updated to reflect the change. People with updated registrations are mailed notice of the change and offered the opportunity to decline the update. This process obtains as much address and name data from the MVA as possible, ensuring clean and accurate voter rolls.
- The system would maintain an opt-in system for unregistered people who don't provide proof of U.S. citizenship during the license transaction. This system provides these people the opportunity to register to vote during the MVA transaction if they affirm citizenship and other eligibility requirements.
- To protect non-citizens, the back-end AVR system filters out MVA customers who provide documents establishing foreign citizenship (like a green card) or temporary visitors who apply for a temporary document. These MVA customers are not offered the chance to register and do not have any information passed to election officials. As an added failsafe, if an ineligible person does somehow become erroneously registered due to a computer error, the person's registration is deemed to have been officially authorized by the state, with no penalty to the individual. In addition, in the event of an error, the ineligible person has not made a false claim of citizenship, helping to protect them against the threat of immigration and criminal law consequences.
- A back-end AVR system can similarly be used for Medicaid, which already verifies citizenship after an application is submitted. Like with a MVA transaction, non-citizens would be automatically excluded from the process. And like with a MVA transaction, any verified and eligible U.S. citizen would be registered to vote and receive a postcard providing the opportunity to opt out of voter registration or affiliate with a political party. Because all members of a household apply for Medicaid on one application, only a back-end system allows every member of the household to become registered to vote.
- The State Board of Elections can extend the back-end AVR system beyond the MVA and Medicaid to other state agencies that verify U.S. citizenship during agency transactions. Options include public colleges and universities or other public benefit agencies. For state agencies that collect most voter information but not citizenship status—such as the Department of Revenue—information could be used to automatically update existing voters' records.

Benefits of Maryland Back-End Automatic Voter Registration





More Complete Registration Records: Back-end AVR registers more eligible voters. In Oregon's back-end AVR system, only five percent of unregistered eligible voters decline registration, while declination rates in Colorado are as low as one percent. Failure to register a large portion of citizens at the MVA and Medicaid misses a critical opportunity for enfranchisement.

Equity: Back-end AVR also ensures that the voter rolls reflect the state's citizenry. AVR registrants in Oregon are younger, less white, less educated, lower-income and more Hispanic than traditional registrants. Research indicates that people of color comprise up to 60 percent of some states' eligible unregistered population. Back-end AVR registers people left out by traditional methods. And only back-end AVR fits with the Medicaid application system, most effectively registering voters who do not drive or own a car.

More Accurate Registration Records: Back-end AVR also ensures accurate records for existing registrants. Accurate registration records are the backbone of an election system. Clean voter rolls ensure that voters are registered in the correct precinct and that election mail (including mail ballots) reaches the correct address, preventing costly undeliverable mail and reducing time spent updating information through paper forms and on Election Day. Back-end AVR ensures that any address or name information received by the MVA is automatically shared with election officials, saving election officials and voters time, effort and money.

Cost Savings: Back-end AVR can also reduce election administration costs. By processing more registrations at the MVA, back-end AVR replaces thousands of paper voter registration forms that voters would otherwise mail or submit to a voter registration drive. Processing paper forms is labor-intensive and expensive, requiring data entry and follow-up on missing information or errors. Similarly, by updating address information more efficiently, back-end AVR can also reduce undeliverable mail and provisional ballots, saving election officials additional money.

Use of Existing Infrastructure: Back-end AVR builds on Maryland's existing election systems, saving money and making implementation easier. MVA already electronically transmits information to election officials for registration purposes, and election officials already send new or updated registrants a notice confirming registration. Declination and party affiliation opportunities can simply be added to this notice, with no need for a new mailer.

We respectfully request that SB831 be amended to require an interim study on AVR, amendment language forthcoming.



SB831 written testimony lrg pdf.pdf

Uploaded by: garland, lynn

Position: FWA

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee Members:

For over a dozen years, I have worked as a volunteer to improve election administration. I am unaffiliated with any organization. My focus is on election accuracy and security, ballot secrecy, and polling place wait-time reduction.

I would like to highlight some of this bill's many excellent parts that I support:

Support: Opening early voting sites at 7:00 am [§10–301.1 [d] (2)(ii)]

Long lines can disenfranchise voters who do not have the physical stamina or the flexibility in their schedules to wait. Long wait times disproportionately affect elderly voters and those in minority communities. Maryland's longest lines on Election Day have occurred early in the morning. Opening Early Voting Centers at 7:00 am to accommodate these voters would help alleviate long lines on Election Day and provide more voting capacity when it is most needed. Extending early voting hours is a more cost effective way to expand capacity than adding costly machines.

Support: Protecting ballot secrecy [§9–310 [a](B)]

Ballot secrecy is a cornerstone of democracy. It was a major innovation in the late 1800's intended to impede vote buying, vote selling and coercion. Democracies throughout the world now ensure ballot secrecy. Privacy sleeves prevent election officials and observers from seeing how people voted. While the voter's identity is visible on the returned ballot envelope, the marked ballot is hidden by the privacy sleeve. The ballot is only revealed once the voter's identity has been physically separated and disassociated from the marked ballot. With Maryland's increased vote-by-mail usage, strengthening its ballot secrecy protections is especially important.

Support: Reducing the use of internet-delivered ballots [§ 9–306 [b](2)]

Canvassing internet-delivered ballots is much more labor intensive than counting mailed absentee ballots; they are more vulnerable to attack; and they are returned at a lower rate than mailed ballots. Nearly all other states reserve internet-delivery of blank absentee ballots to military, overseas voters and voters with disabilities.

Maryland did not finish counting ballots until November 23, 2020, one of the last states to do so, even though it was allowed to start processing its absentee ballots on October 1, the earliest date of any state. This delay was due primarily to the quantity of internet-delivered ballots.

Each internet-delivered ballot must be hand copied onto a traditional paper ballot to be scanned, a lengthy process leading to delayed results, increased costs for counties and the potential for inaccuracies. Voters do not see the ballot that is cast on their behalf; and audits will not detect a discrepancy in this process.

Large-scale absentee ballot fraud is far simpler to accomplish with ballots delivered over the internet than with paper ballots mailed to brick-and-mortar addresses. One smart hacker with resources could attack Maryland's online ballot delivery system on a large scale without detection.ⁱ Top computer scientists have repeatedly warned that the credentials (social

security number, date of birth, driver's license number...) needed to impersonate Maryland voters are widely available on the internet. Reducing internet ballot delivery is key to reducing the attack surface.

Each election cycle, voters return the internet delivered ballots at a much lower rate than traditionally mailed ballots.ⁱⁱ In the 2020 general election, the return rate for internet-delivered ballots in Montgomery County, for instance, was only 74%, compared to an overall return rate of 89%.ⁱⁱⁱ

In 2020, anticipating the large increase in absentee ballots and the enormous workload to hand copy the internet-delivered ones, the SBE discouraged voters from requesting internet-delivered ballots through voter outreach: "*Get Your Ballot Sent by Mail, Not Email, to Save Time and Money* ... Receiving your ballot by mail is free and more convenient than receiving it by email," said Linda Lamone, Administrator of the State Board of Elections. "To save time and money, request that your ballot be mailed. This will also make Maryland's vote counting process more efficient because local election judges will not have to hand copy ballots."^{iv} The voter outreach campaign reduced the percentage of absentee voters requesting internet delivery from 36% in 2018 to 10% in 2020. But there were still 163,907 internet ballot delivery requests in 2020 compared to 55,988 in 2018.^v

Support: Processing absentee ballots prior to Election Day [§11-302(b)(1)&(3)]

With early processing of absentee ballots, election officials have more time to cure those envelopes/oaths that have problems. Early processing also helps election officials meet the certification deadlines despite the demanding workload of canvassing and auditing. Although early processing is helpful, it is essential that results not be tabulated prior to Election Day to prevent any possible leakage of election results. Early leakage of election results can facilitate fraud.

Support: Mandating precinct-level reporting [§11-402 (b)]

Precinct-level reporting helps identify anomalies (ballot programming errors, mischief etc.) that may go undetected with less granular reporting. The data is also helpful to candidates.

Support: Increasing SBE transparency [§2-102 [d](2)]

Increased transparency, especially the early release of meeting materials, informs the public about SBE's issues so that the public can contribute in a more helpful way.

Support with Amendment: Fairness to candidates in BMD ballot presentations

[§ 9-102[d](1)VI & § 9-210 (B-1)]

Maryland's past BMD limit of 7 candidates per page was not fair to all candidates. I agree that *any new voting system should present the candidate choices in such a way to enable the voter to consider each candidate as equally as possible, for instance on the same screen if possible*. However, the wording in the bill is too prescriptive and should allow flexibility for various technical solutions. Placing this requirement in the voting system certification section of the law may overly constrain the already limited choices for new voting systems.

Please support these parts of SB831 to help improve Maryland's elections.

Lynn Garland
Independent Advisor on Voting Systems Security and Accuracy
Bethesda, Maryland

ⁱ NIST IR 7711, Sept 2011, "Security Best Practices for the Electronic Transmission of Election Materials for UOCAVA Voters": "In most cases, any mechanism used to remotely authenticate voters will serve as a secondary method to authenticate returned ballots, with voter signatures generally providing the primary mechanism to authenticate returned ballots."

ⁱⁱ STATEWIDE RETURN RATE OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS IN MARYLAND

	Ballots sent by mail	Ballots sent electronically	Difference
2016 primary	76.45 %	62.55%	13.90%
2016 general	82.03%	70.98%	11.05%
2018 primary	72.92%	58.71%	14.21%
2018 general	81.29%	69.55%	11.74%

The 2016 and 2018 figures are from a Jan 3, 2019 email from Erin Peronne. Throughout the states, "Contrary to expectations of many in the election community, the preliminary data indicate that in most states (11 of the 16 respondents) electronic ballots had lower return rates."

(https://www.overseasvotefoundation.org/files/OVF_research_newsletter_2013_summer_corrected.pdf page 3)

ⁱⁱⁱ The overall absentee ballot return rate for Maryland in the 2020 general election was 89%. p21

https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/2020_stats/Nov%203%20Election%20Report_Final.pdf

The 2020 state return rates for internet delivered ballots have not yet been published.

^{iv} SBE Voter Outreach, September, 2020, "Get Your Ballot Sent by Mail, Not Email, to Save Time and Money"

^v https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/2020_stats/Mail-in%20Ballot%20Request%20Counts%20with%20Chart.pdf

SB0831-EHE_MACo_SWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Kinnally, Kevin

Position: FWA



Senate Bill 831

Election Reform Act of 2021

MACo Position: **SUPPORT
WITH AMENDMENTS**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee

Date: March 3, 2021

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 831 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This comprehensive bill makes several changes to the structure and administration of Maryland elections, including boosting transparency for local Boards of Elections, providing needed flexibility for the canvass of ballots, and requiring that election results be reported by precinct.

While most of the bill's facets are outside of the purview of county governments, one component of SB 831 – detailed reporting by precinct – places a very substantial administrative and cost burden onto county-funded local Boards of Elections. MACo urges amendments to ensure state resources be provided to support its substantial costs, and alleviate the mandate.

MACo appreciates that this bill provides local boards of elections with necessary and reasonable flexibility for the canvass of ballots, avoiding administrative complications that could disrupt the timely certification of election results. Additionally, this bill promotes transparency and accountability by requiring local Boards of Elections to post and maintain all open meeting materials on publicly accessible websites.

However, the bill mandates that election results provided by local boards of elections – acting in their capacity as boards of canvassers – and the State Board of Elections (SBE), must include results by precinct for early, absentee, and provisional voting. MACo does not raise policy objections with this goal: county concerns are merely practical and cost-driven.

As a rule, MACo resists state policies that result in costly or burdensome local implementation. This bill will result in substantial costs to local Boards of Elections, which indicate significant costs associated with generating and maintaining hundreds of ballot styles, costs for equipment purchases/leases, equipment storage and transportation, staff compensation and training, and other overhead.

MACo suggests that if reporting by precinct merits a top priority for state policymakers, implementing legislation should either direct state agencies to carry out these functions at state expense, or should provide the resources needed by local election boards and staff.

Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on SB 831, with amendments necessary to avoid a substantial unfunded mandate on local governments. MACo would be pleased to join local election administrators in working with the Committee to develop bill language that accomplishes this goal.

National Vote at Home Coalition Testimony for MD S

Uploaded by: Tabuteau, Richard

Position: FWA



Testimony of The National Vote at Home Coalition In Support of Maryland's SB 831

Thank you Chair Pinsky and committee members for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 831. The National Vote at Home Coalition is pleased to join local leaders in support of this measure, with additional technical amendments, and are grateful for your time and attention.

After drop boxes were introduced last year, voters and election officials have spoken: they 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 a significant amount of money by dramatically reducing the amount spent on return postage for ballots. We support the efforts in this bill to make them more widely available in the future.

We are grateful that the sponsor has been considering ways to simplify processes and ensure that all voters have their voices heard. Technical improvements, like allowing the preprocessing of ballots 15 days before the election, will lead to much quicker results and allow election officials to allocate their staff time more effectively.

We are also greatly supportive of the ability for voters to be notified of deficiencies in their absentee requests, but also in their returned ballot envelopes. This notification and "cure" process is one of our top recommendations to every state and we are thrilled it has been included in this bill. Last year in an effort to reduce rejected ballots the state worked hard to implement some 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 2016.² This bill codifies that cure process into law, and requires that voters are notified when a correctable error is found with their ballot and given a chance to fix it.

We stand ready to assist however possible to offer some technical amendments to make sure the details of these reforms work as intended. Maryland has made great strides in expanding access and

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

² Based on 2020 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))

VOTE **HOME**

options to voters and we urge this committee to support SB 831 with technical amendments to codify and build upon the successes of 2020's election reforms.

SB 831- Testimony -Election Reform - Opposed.pdf

Uploaded by: Ennis, Ella

Position: UNF

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman
And Members of the
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Senate of Maryland
Annapolis, Maryland

RE: SB 831- Election Reform Act – Oppose

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

I am opposed to SB 831 provisions on absentee ballots. I am opposed to beginning to count votes 15 days prior to Election Day and to allowing a voter to submit a corrected an absentee ballot up to 10 days following election day. How far after the election will citizens have to wait for election results? I believe such a delay in completing the vote count will cause confusion for voters and undermine the confidence of voters in election results and reduce voter participation.

On Page 26 of SB 831 beginning on line 17, the bill describes a process for notifying a voter that there is an omission or error on their ballot. I object strongly to this section of the bill.

Currently the process for counting absentee ballots is to separate the ballot from the envelope before reviewing the ballot using a team of one Democrat and one Republican. One person opens the envelope and hands the ballot to the other team member. The 2nd person reviews the ballot for completeness and correctness. The envelope with the voter's name is kept separate so that the ballot is secret. Under SB 831 – you would have to keep the envelope with the voter's identification with the ballot to be able to advise them of any errors or omissions. Multiple people would be involved in the process of advising the voter of the error or omission. The voter's choices would no longer be private and their right to a secret ballot would be violated. The voter could be intimidated if they thought someone would know how they voted. Privacy of a citizen's ballot is always a very serious concern, but particularly so in today's hyper-partisan political atmosphere where anyone with a different point of view can be painted as a domestic terrorist.

On Page 27 of the bill is a provision that if two completed ballots are received from a voter the first properly filled-out ballot is to be counted. What happens if a voter shows up on election day and states that they did not vote by an absentee ballot? Currently voter signature verification is not carried out for absentee ballot applications or ballots. This is another problem with starting to count absentee ballots 15 days prior to the election.

On the section of the bill that requires Federal candidates to take part in at least one public debate—a great idea—but the question is can Maryland State law require a Federal candidate to actually take part in a public debate?

The requirements for State Board of Elections meetings are positive, but overall the bill is too broad and the provisions on absentee ballots are unacceptable.

Please delete the sections on absentee ballots and ballot counting or give SB 831 an UNFAVORABLE Report.

Sincerely,

Ella Ennis

P.O. Box 437

Port Republic, MD 20676

E-mail: eee437@comcast.net

NFINK-D32-OPPOSE-SB831.pdf

Uploaded by: Fink, Nelda

Position: UNF

Written Testimony UNFAVORABLE for SB 831 – ELECTION REFORM ACT OF 2021 - OPPOSE
Nelda Fink, 8372 Norwood Dr, Millersville
MD District 32

Honorable Delegate Kaiser - Chair, Honorable Delegate Washington - Vice Chair,
Honorable committee members,

I oppose this bill mainly because it allows for ballot boxes. These are not secure and anyone can steal them, destroy what is inside and risk the punishment. What has been destroyed is lost even if the theft is investigated and charges admitted. The damage is already done and those people whose ballots were lost will not come back and revote. Citizens need to go to the public polling places, have a little community spirit, get to know their neighbors and vote at the polling place in person. The more we allow alternatives to this scenario, the more we divide our neighbors and our country. We are supposed to unify, not divide, so please OPPOSE this bill.

Sincerely,

Nelda Fink, 8372 Norwood Dr, Millersville
MD District 32
UNFAVORABLE for SB 831 – ELECTION REFORM ACT OF 2021 - OPPOSE