

The Honorable Anne Kaiser Chairman
and Members of the Ways and Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis, Maryland

RE: HB 57 – Voters Rights Protection Act of 2021 - OPPOSE

Dear Chairman Kaiser and Committee Members,

HB 57 combines several separate issues in one bill.

First and foremost, I most strongly oppose allowing mail-in or absentee ballots to be postmarked the day AFTER the election. Votes tabulated and posted or released during Early Voting and on Election Day will allow a candidate to know how many votes they are shy and use that knowledge to pressure voters to mail in enough ballots the day after election to win. Correcting errors to the mailed ballot or envelope after election day again can favor one Party or one candidate over others.

The rights of all voters to have access to adequate number of polling places should be respected and treated the same. HB 57 sets one set of rules for combining or moving or eliminating polling places for “voting age populations” (not registered voters) in census tracts of 20% or more of minority or language minority communities but not all communities. Having equal access to polling places should not be dependent on one’s race or ethnicity. One group should not be favored over another.

HB 57 imposes almost impossible legal and bureaucratic hurdles to combining or moving precincts by requiring them to hold public hearings, obtain approved legislation from the local government and obtain a declaratory judgement from the Circuit Court and written approval of the Attorney General before making a change in polling places. Under HB 57 you would not be able to change a precinct’s polling place even if you are adding new precincts. After census results are published you may need to move the boundaries of an existing precinct which could include moving a polling place to add more voting place capacity.

What about majority minority counties? Does the minority rights apply when the minority’s race is white? Why promote division among races and ethnic groups? Set the same rules for all citizens.

During the 2020 Election the State Board of Elections only allowed counties to have the same number of polling places as they had high schools. In Calvert County that meant only 5 polling places in place of the usual 23. Voters waited more than 2 hours at every polling place to vote in person on election day. Because the number of polling places was so restricted parking became a big problem. This was unfair and may have caused some voters not to vote. We need to restore in-person voting at all polling places and where needed add polling places with adequate parking so that ALL voters can vote in a reasonable length of time. We do not need HB 57 with its divisive polarization of citizens by racial or language groups.

Please give HB 57 an Unfavorable Report.

Sincerely,
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