

Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Eric Luedtke

Committee: Ways and Means

Organization Submitting: Lower Shore Progressive Caucus

Person Submitting: Jared Schablein, LSPC Chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0156 on behalf of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus. The Caucus is a political and activist organization on the Eastern Shore, unaffiliated with any political party, committed to empowering working people by building a Progressive movement on the Lower Eastern Shore.

Ensuring the right to vote is protected for all is a top priority of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus and our members. If the insurrections against our government in D.C just a few short weeks ago have taught us anything it is we need to do everything in our power to protect our Democracy that is under attack.

HB0156 does that by protecting and making it easier to vote for voting blocs that historically have faced barriers in terms of voting in two major ways. The first way is by ensuring that precinct boundaries and polling places are decided with the needs of these groups in mind. This is achieved in this bill by requiring the local board of elections to contact and obtain input from large residential institutional communities including institutions of higher education, retirement communities, senior communities, and military installations when establishing precinct boundaries and designating the location of polling places. This will ensure that these communities have polling places and avenues to participate in our system that are accessible to them.

The second way is by requiring the State Board of Elections to maintain a page on its website that includes certain information about and links regarding voter registration and voting by certain students/other groups. This information will be vital to ensure that these communities have the information they need to be involved and have their voices heard.

It is for these reasons the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus supports this bill and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.