

**February 16, 2021**

**Testimony on HB 760  
Election Law - Time for Processing Absentee Ballots  
Ways and Means**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 760 which would allow for the preprocessing of mail-in ballots, beginning 14 days before Election Day.

According to Vote at Home, preprocessing covers an assortment of processes that occur before a mail 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.

While we support HB 760, one of the benefits of preprocessing ballot is that it allows for ballot curing which is not addressing in the bill. As we saw during the 2020 election, even with robust public education efforts voters may forget to sign the oath on their return envelope. These voters should be provided with an opportunity to cure their ballot during this 14-day window.

Timely processing is a crucial first step to implementing other mail-in voting best practices being considered this session. We urge a favorable report and hope the committee will consider our amendment to allow for curing.