

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 450 AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTION LAW – POLLING SITES – FIREARMS PROHIBITIONS

TO: THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

SUBMITTED BY: MOLLY VOIGT; STATE LEGISLATIVE MANAGER, GIFFORDS

DATE: JANUARY 29, 2021

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways & Means Committee: thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of Giffords and Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, the organization founded by former Congresswoman and gun violence survivor Gabby Giffords.

I am writing in support of **HB 450**, which would prohibit the carrying or display of a firearm within 100 feet of a polling site during an election. Currently, ten states and the District of Columbia place restrictions on guns in or around locations where elections are being conducted.¹ HB 450 would allow Maryland to join that list.

During the 2020 election, Americans ginned up by baseless claims of widespread voter fraud threatened to turn up at the polls with their guns to safeguard the vote. Thankfully, this largely did not come to pass, yet after it became apparent that President Trump had lost the election, armed individuals began to descend on locations where the vote was being counted, threatening election workers and others tasked with conducting America's sacred free and fair elections.

While the scale and tactics we witnessed in 2020 were unprecedented, the use of guns to chill free speech and other constitutional activities, and intimidate voters is nothing new.² In particular, guns at the polls have been used to disenfranchise Black and Brown Americans who are disproportionately impacted by gun violence.³

In 2021 and beyond, after Americans have witnessed armed Trump supporters mount an attack of insurrection on the United States Capitol Building, threatening the lives of federal elected officials, the presence of guns in and around areas where elections are

¹ Giffords Law Center, Preventing Armed Voter Intimidation: A State by State Analysis, October, 2020; <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/preventing-armed-voter-intimidation-a-state-by-state-analysis/>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

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taking place will likely be seen as an even greater threat of violence. Guns have no place in the polls and can only serve to harm, not help, the cause of democracy.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on HB 450.

ABOUT GIFFORDS

Giffords is a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving lives from gun violence. Founded and led by former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, Giffords inspires the courage of people from all walks of life to make America safer.