

February 5, 2021

Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of HB 656 / HB 493: Election Law – Early Voting Locations – Accessibility by Public Transportation - Voters with Disabilities

Members of the Maryland House of Delegates, Ways and Means Committee.

I am a Maryland voter and advocate for those living with disabilities. Many people within our communities have challenging physical conditions, visible and invisible disabilities that require assistance to perform everyday tasks like voting. Many in our community use public transportation and 500 feet from a transit stop is a long distance when you have a physical impairment that makes walking difficult or impossible. We need to improve access to voting locations and ballot collection stations.

I fully support any bill that levels the field of voting rights for persons living with disabilities. We are just as willing to voice our opinions and to cast our votes, the same as any other American citizen. We just have a variety of physical, or mental challenges that may limit our abilities to get to the polls, to read the ballot, to communicate our questions or to ask for assistance, or we may need accommodations accessing voting stations at our local polling places. Many of our challenges may even be invisible to the average, non-disabled person.

I trust that many of you were able to access and to read my testimony today without difficult. Maybe a small accommodation like set of eye glasses, is all that you require to gain full access to these materials. Many within our community require more to access their right to vote, and to be treated as equals while accessing the voting system, polling locations and its polling station apparatus.

We may be unable to access the voting system in the same way as other voters do, but that does not make our voices any less important, or any less meaningful to our ourselves, our communities, our neighborhoods or to our voting districts.

Please support HB 656/ HB 493 and help to bring equity and equality to the voting process by making polling stations accessible to all of Maryland's voters. So that every citizen can exercise their rights to cast a vote and to make their voices heard.

Thank you for your time, equitably accessing my testimony, and for considering my testimony today.

Mr. Richard Ceruolo

Parent and advocate for persons living with disabilities.
Parent Advocacy Consortium