



NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF THE BLIND
MARYLAND

Live the life you want.

Subject: Favorable with Amendment HB1020

To: House Ways and Means Committee

From: Members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

Contact: Sharon Maneki, Director of Legislation and Advocacy
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
9013 Nelson Way
Columbia, MD 21045
Phone: 410-715-9596
Email: nfbmdsm@gmail.com

Date: March 9, 2021

Amendment 1: On page 3, after “An election judge shall give an eligible voter using curbside voting,” change line 21 to read as follows: “the choice to cast their ballot by either using the ballot marking device or the paper ballot.”

Amendment 2: Current law states that, “A voting system selected, certified, and implemented under this section [Article 9-102, Election Law] shall: provide access to voters with disabilities that is equivalent to access afforded voters without disabilities.” This bill should be amended to add, “and shall accommodate curbside voting” to this section of the law. The Committee should determine where this amendment belongs in the bill.

These amendments are necessary to avoid discrimination against voters with disabilities. Many voters with disabilities cannot cast their ballot on paper. For instance, blind voters with multiple disabilities could benefit from curbside voting, but not if their only choice is to cast their ballot on paper because they would lose both privacy and the secret ballot. The current ballot marking device used in Maryland can and should be brought out to the curbside voter. In the future, when selecting new voting systems, the State Board of Elections must select a ballot marking device that can accommodate curbside voting.

The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland supports the concept of curbside voting because it will make the voting process more accessible to voters with disabilities. We support

this bill only if the amendments that we have recommended are adopted. Maryland should not enact legislation that deliberately discriminates against voters with disabilities.

The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland appreciates the bill's inclusion of protection of the secret ballot. On page 3, line 4, the bill reads that the curbside voting location must "preserve the secrecy of the voter's ballot while voting." In reality, curbside voting will not protect the secret ballot unless voters have the choice to use the ballot marking device.

Please vote in favor of HB1020 if the amendments recommended by the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland are included in this legislation.