



Barbara Noveau, Executive Director, DoTheMostGood

Committee: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB0057 – Voters' Rights Protection Act of 2020

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: January 26, 2021

Bill Contact: Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grassroots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a broad range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda at the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that support and uplift all members of its communities. DTMG strongly supports HB0057 because it will address inequities in voting rights that disproportionately impact our black, brown, low income and rural citizens all across our state.

The provisions of HB0057 prohibiting a local board of elections from making a covered change in voting locations except under certain circumstances is important. This year, due to the pandemic, the number of voting locations statewide were reduced by approximately 80%. In Montgomery County there were fewer than 40 voting locations on election day. In Worcester County they were reduced from 16 to 4. While vote-by-mail mitigated the damage, the impact of fewer polling stations put an undue burden on our most vulnerable populations. Across the country we have seen blatant voter suppression in the capricious reduction of voting locations, often with little or no notice.

HB0057 would also require local election boards to attempt to contact a voter who failed to sign a paper absentee ballot application and to obtain the voter's signature so the ballot request may be processed in a timely manner. Similarly, local boards must attempt to contact a voter who failed to sign the oath on the absentee ballot envelope and obtain the voter's signature before the conclusion of the canvass so the ballot may be counted. It is widely known that in the Georgia elections this year, a massive effort to cure vote-by-mail ballots likely made a difference in the outcome of certain races.

Finally, HB0057 addresses attempted voter suppression by prohibiting a person from using a camera, phone or other device capable of recording video to record voters as they approach or deposit ballots in a ballot drop box. Just as this is prohibited inside polling locations, it should be prohibited at drop boxes as well.

Free and unfettered access to the ballot is the right of every eligible voter in the state. With all of the noxious ways certain circumstances disproportionately impact those whose only voice is their vote, it is imperative that we continuously monitor and improve the protection of voters' rights.

For all of the reasons mentioned above, DTMG strongly supports HB0057 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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