



MARYLAND 20-20 WATCH

February 26, 2021

Ways and Means Committee, Maryland General Assembly:

Maryland 20-20 Watch strongly supports **HB 1145 Election Law - Absentee Ballots - Requests and Signature Verification** and we ask that you vote this bill out of committee.

The integrity of the election process is the very foundation of what gives *your role* as legislators legitimacy. If the public has no confidence in the election process, they will not see those elected as legitimately governing.

As Maryland's most active election integrity organization, our volunteers have witnessed the problems associated with absentee ballots having lax identification measures.

In the 2020 election our volunteers were contacted by people who went to the polls on election day to vote but were told that they needed to vote provisionally because they had already voted absentee. These voters professed to election judges and our volunteers that they had not cast absentee ballots. They were made to vote by provisional ballot. But, if during the canvassing process, it was found that absentee ballots were cast in their names their provisional ballots would not be counted and their votes would have been stolen.

We had numerous accounts of absentee ballots arriving at the wrong addresses and at addresses where the voter hadn't lived for years, if ever. Any of those ballots could have been, and may have been, voted and returned by whomever received them. The lax voter identification needed to accompany the ballots was no deterrent and actually invited illegal behavior.

These voters' experiences vividly illustrate the reasons strict absentee ballot handling procedures must be in place, and why strict identification of those requesting absentee ballots and those returning absentee ballots must be required.

It is your duty to enact laws which ensure the legitimacy of every vote. Maryland election law demands this.

§ 1-201. Statement of purpose. The intention of this article is that the conduct of elections should inspire public confidence and trust by assuring that:

(6) **security and integrity are maintained in the casting of ballots**, canvass of votes, and reporting of election results;

(7) the **prevention of fraud and corruption is diligently pursued**; (emphasis added)

Please do as Maryland election law mandates and prevent fraud and corruption by securing the casting of absentee ballots. Vote for HB1145.

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