



**Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team**

**Committee:** Ways and Means

**Testimony on:** HB0057 – Voters’ Rights Protection Act of 2020

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** January 26, 2021

**Bill Contact:** Delegate Rosenberg

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2000 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Potomac east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep its members healthy and safe in a clean environment, that support and uplift all members of its communities, and that promote equity across all of our diverse communities. DTMG strongly supports HB0057 because it will ensure safe and equitable access to voting, thereby allowing stronger participation and representation in our government.

Changes, relocations, and consolidation of early voting sites and election day polling places cause confusion for voters and may reduce turnout. Such changes may be especially harmful in low income and minority neighborhoods. HB0057 will make sure that relocations, reductions, and/or consolidations of voting locations that could unduly affect areas with 20% or more minority populations are undertaken by local County Boards of Election only with significant prior thought and public input. Such potential changes would have to be announced to constituents, opened to public comment, and undergo third party analysis or legal approval.

In addition, HB0057 will strengthen mail-in voting by giving voters a chance to remediate simple inadvertent errors on mail-in ballot applications and mail-in ballots. HB0057 will require local Boards of Election to attempt to contact a voter who failed to sign a paper absentee ballot application to obtain the voter’s signature so that the absentee ballot request may be processed and also attempt to contact a voter who failed to sign the oath on the ballot envelope to obtain the voter’s signature before the conclusion of the canvass so that the ballot may be counted. These are the most common errors that voters inadvertently make and the most common reasons that mail-in ballots are rejected. These mistakes are made more frequently by new voters and by minority and low-literacy voters. Enacting these simple fixes that are also in use in other states will allow voters to remediate a missing signature and will promote equity in voting for all Maryland citizens.

Furthermore, HB0057 will prohibit voter intimidation at mail-in ballot drop-boxes, by prohibiting unauthorized photographing or video recording of voters dropping off their ballots.

Finally, HB0057 addresses keeping our state and local elections safe from foreign interference by requiring certain large websites to make reasonable efforts to detect false information about a voter’s eligibility or registration or the time, place or manner of an election and to report that information to the State Board of Elections. Unfortunately, this is a very timely requirement given the recent prevalence of cyber-hacking

Therefore, DTMG strongly supports HB0057 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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