

March 2, 2021

**Testimony on HB 1228**  
**Election Law – Ballot Drop Boxes – Prohibited Acts**  
**Ways and Means**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 1228 which establishes penalties for the tampering or destruction of ballot drop boxes.

During the 2020 election cycle, Maryland experienced a larger-than-average demand for mail-in voting due to the COVID-19 pandemic and most returned their ballot using secure drop boxes. These drop boxes provided voters a safe, secure method to return a vote-by-mail ballot that was controlled and operated by the local boards of election, without requiring voters to visit an in-person site or use of mail. According to the State Board of Elections 2020 election final reports, 13% of voters used a ballot drop box to return their ballots in primary. About 2/3 of voters, over 1 million voters, who received a mail-in ballot used a ballot drop box to return their voted ballots during the general election.

The secure drop boxes were monitored 24/7 using video surveillance or in-person security. Election officials also collected ballots at least twice a day. The drop boxes were also designed to be indestructible and able to sufficiently protect ballots.

While there were no reports of tampering or destruction of ballot boxes in 2020, we support putting holding anyone attempting to destroy, deface, or tamper with drop boxes or ballots in those drop boxes accountable.

We urge a favorable report.