



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 5, 2021

The Honorable Delegate Anne R. Kaiser
Chairwoman of The Ways and Means Committee
6 Bladen Street, Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

House Bill 1020

Good Afternoon, Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and members of this wonderful committee. I am Delegate Williams from District 22 and I am testifying in **favor of House Bill 1020**, also known as **Election Law – Curbside Voting – Establishment**.

HB1020 is based off of legislation from the Virginia State Legislature. Virginia House Bill 1998, introduced in the 2009 legislative session, sought to expand voting access. Our version of this legislation takes that initiative and expands upon it by including expecting mothers and those who may not have the same ease of access. However, Virginia is not the only state that has curbside voting. Other such liberal bastions such as North Carolina, Texas, Missouri, Iowa, and Wisconsin amongst others also have curbside voting.

I am introducing this bill in hopes of extending voting opportunities to more members of our community. Everyone should be guaranteed the right to participate in the democratic process. In fact, voting is the single most effective and important thing a citizen can do. Establishing curbside voting in Maryland would ensure that Marylander with either a permanent or temporary physical disability will have the opportunity to exercise their vote as they wish.

While yes we have “vote by mail” and drop boxes, there are Marylanders that do not like to vote by mail or via drop box. Some want to go to a polling place and physically mark a ballot in person. By providing this service, additional members of our community will be able to be civically engaged in a manner that they feel comfortable with. Individuals should not feel that the process of casting their ballot is an inconvenience.

This bill would also go a long way to aid our veterans by increasing access to the ballot box. The Veterans Caucus has issued a statement of support for this bill, because as we know, many veterans return from service with life-altering disabilities. It is beyond me to think that we

would turn away a person who put their lives on the line for this country, simply because we do not have equitable access for them at our polling locations. It goes against the values of this state to make voting inaccessible. If this bill becomes law, we can ensure that every vote counts.

You should have before you amendments that address a number of comments and feedback that we have received from a number of stakeholders. The amendment does limit the availability of curbside voting out of concerns raised by the local board of elections and MACO but I hope that once we see the usefulness and success of curbside voting we can expand its use to more polling locations throughout our state.

For these reasons, I am again urging the committee to vote favorable for House Bill 1020.

Sincerely,

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, Esq.