



TESTIMONY FOR HB0341 ELECTION – ABSENTEE BALLOT CANVASS – START AND RELEASE OF TABULATION

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Lehman

Committee: Ways and Means

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0341 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members strongly support voting by mail, not only as a way to stay safe during the pandemic that we are currently struggling with, but to ensure that more people have access to vote. Voting in person is hard for people who don't have time off from work, or good transportation, or mobility.

As we saw during the last election cycle, voting by mail encouraged more people to participate in the election. But then came the wait after election day. The long wait. While states that canvassed their ballots early were able to quickly determine their vote count, other states that waited were overwhelmed with last-minute counting and a nation waiting for results.

This bill would allow local Boards of Elections to canvass 14 days earlier than election day. This is important because:

- Voters want to know that their ballots are accepted, or if they are rejected
- Voters want to know results quickly on election day

Many voters who used mail-in-voting for the first time this past election cycle waited and waited to know if their ballot would be counted, or if they needed to get in line to cast it in person. The earlier that determination and notification can be made, the better.

However, the downside is that the canvass results should not be known before everyone has had a chance to vote. This bill addresses that concern by prohibiting anyone from publicizing the results before the polls have closed or the precinct has reported.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.