



7338 Baltimore Ave
Suite 102
College Park, MD 20740

Committee: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB 1345 – Mail-In Voting – Certification of Assistance, Design of Materials, and Ballot Curing

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 9, 2021

The Maryland Sierra Club urges a favorable report on HB 1345. This bill will improve communications with voters by creating uniform design and simplifying absentee voting materials, requiring best practices for use of plain language in instructions, eliminating the requirement of a separate paper form for certification by an individual who assists a voter in casting an absentee ballot, and providing a clear process for a voter to cure relatively minor problems such as not signing the outer return envelope.

The Sierra Club and its members care about both the natural and human environments, including ending racial and social injustice. We believe that providing information about and access to registration and voting to all who are eligible should be viewed as fundamental to our democracy.

As a grassroots organization, the Sierra Club supports efforts to make voting as accessible and convenient as possible for all eligible voters, regardless of whether they choose to vote in person at Early Voting Centers or on election day or by mail.

This bill would make the overall mailing of absentee ballots simpler, with instructions that are clearer and easier for voters to read and understand. The mailing would contain one less piece of paper than the mailings in the 2020 election because the certification of assistance would no longer be a separate form. The bill would also require a uniform design for envelopes used to mail election materials to and from voters, which would make election materials stand out and easier to identify in a large stack of mail.

Some mail-in ballots were rejected and not counted in the 2020 election because of relatively minor problems such as not signing the outer return envelope. As many as 18 states have formal processes that allow voters to cure these minor problems so their vote can be counted. While at least some local boards of elections in Maryland did alert voters and allow them to cure problems, there is not currently a uniform statewide standard or process. This bill would establish a uniform ballot curing process that will ensure all voters are treated fairly and equitably no matter where they live in the state.

Voting is the foundation of our democracy, and we believe it is essential to racial and social justice to make the process of voting as accessible and convenient as possible for every individual who is eligible.

We urge a favorable report on HB 1345.

Rich Norling
Chair, Political Committee
Rich.Norling@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members.