



Subject: Opposition to HB1145, Election Law - Absentee Ballots - Requests and Signature Verification

To: House Ways and Means Committee

From: Members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

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Date: March 2, 2021

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland oppose HB1145, a bill to require signature verification of absentee ballot envelopes. This bill will increase discrimination against voters with disabilities and will create additional access barriers to the voting process.

Most blind people can sign documents but it is almost impossible to verify their signature because they cannot duplicate their signature in the same way every time. According to this bill, the local board must verify the signature with “the signed affidavit included with the voter’s absentee ballot application in accordance with § 9–305 of this subtitle; and the voter’s registration record in accordance with regulations adopted by the state board.” The blind voter could lose the right to cast their ballot because their signature could not be verified through no fault of their own, which would be an act of discrimination. As all voters grow older, their signature is likely to be different than their voter registration signature because of changes in vision that occur naturally. This is another example of the discrimination that this bill will create. Subjecting voters to an adjudication process will also be a burden.

When requesting an absentee ballot, the voter must provide “(i) a copy of the voter’s driver’s license or identification card that is compliant with the Federal Real ID Act; (ii) a document that is acceptable as proof of residency for purposes of the Federal Real ID Act.” Requiring an

additional proof of residency is redundant and burdensome because it was already required to obtain the driver's license. Such a requirement is an unnecessary accessibility barrier to voting.

Please give HB1145 an unfavorable report because it creates unnecessary barriers to the voting process.