



TESTIMONY FOR HB 398 Election Law – Time Off for Employee Voting

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Palakovich Carr

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 HB 398 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state. We have well over 30,000 members across the state.

At this moment in time, what could be more important than allowing people to participate in Democracy?

Maryland does a pretty good job of ensuring that voting is easy and safe and that the process of registering is flexible and uncomplicated. However, there are many people in Maryland who are registered to vote but cannot exercise their right to vote because they do not have time off to cast their vote.

Let's face it – not everyone can work their way through the mail-in ballot process. Some are nervous about whether their ballot will be counted, or if they missed a step, or forgot to sign the envelope and it will be rejected. For a lot of people, voting in person is peace of mind. If they have trouble, there are people available to help. That is the preference. What that does, though, is it makes for long lines before and after work and during lunch. Many workers don't have the kind of time to spare waiting in those lines, not knowing when they will be able to get to work or get back home.

What if they could take off at 2pm, or 10:30 am? That would even out the lines and it would also help support the poll workers by making the number of people voting at any one time easier.

It would really help those who are in low-paying jobs, where they don't really get time off, or they have odd hours, or day care considerations. It would increase participation in the voting process.

Of all the things that we can do in the name of Democracy, this is such a little thing that would go a long way to help get people engaged. The members of the Maryland Legislative Coalition support this bill and we believe it is an important step forward in the process of making Democracy more accessible. We recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.