



The Arc Maryland
8601 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 140
Columbia, MD 21046
T 410.571.9320
F 410.974.6021
www.thearcmd.org

**House Bill 423: Election Law Voting Systems Accessibility for Voters with Disabilities
Assigned to Ways and Means Committee
Sponsored by Delegate Feldmark**

Position: Support

The Arc Maryland is a statewide, grassroots advocacy organization dedicated to the rights and quality of life for individuals with intellectual and or Developmental Disabilities and their families and we support House Bill 423.

People with disabilities should be able to depend on a safe voting process that supports equitable access to polling booths and the employment of a uniform ballot/vote reading system. They should not be physically separated at the polls from other voters, and in the position of having to use the alternative “accessible ballot- a personally identifiable ballot that is unequal in appearance to the general ballot-causes the segregation of ballots cast by people with disabilities, thereby jeopardizing the privacy of a person’s vote. This was the reason language prohibiting a segregated ballot was included in Maryland Election Law Article §9-102(f)(1), Annotated Code of Maryland.” People with disabilities should have access to a ballot that may not be set apart or distinguishable, in size and form, from a ballot cast by a voter without a disability.”

The fundamental right to vote is a cornerstone upon which our democracy, and by extension our society, are held together. House Bill 423 as adopted would ensure Maryland is on compliance with its commitment to ensure that people with disabilities have access to a voting process that is private, safe and accessible.

In conclusion, The Arc Maryland supports this legislation and encourages a favorable report from the committee.

Sincerely,

Mat Rice, Director of Public Policy

mrice@thearcmd.org

410-925-5706