



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

SB 683 – Election Law – Permanent Absentee Ballot List

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl & Richard Willson, Co-Presidents

DATE: March 30, 2021

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy. **We support SB683 to create a permanent absentee list because we believe it can help make voting more accessible and give voters control over how and when they vote.**

Voters who choose to “opt in” to mail-in voting by voluntarily placing themselves on the permanent absentee list will receive a ballot for all elections rather than having to request and return an application each election cycle. This eliminates an extra step for voters as well as for the Boards of Elections which would have to process each application. Voters can also remove themselves from the list should their circumstances or preferences change.

The 2020 General Election demonstrated that expanded absentee voting is feasible and acceptable to voters. Approximately 50 percent of voters—in a year of high turnout—voted by absentee, or mail-in, voting. Voters effectively followed instructions and according to the State Board of Elections (SBE), only 0.24% of mail-in ballots were rejected. Furthermore, for the more than 1.5 million voters who used mail-in voting in the fall of 2020, the SBE has a good start on updating the voter registration list, a common concern voiced about ballots by mail.

While absentee voting can be a convenience for many voters, it particularly benefits voters with transportation problems, disabilities, and parents and other caretakers. Voters are not restricted to voting only during the hours a precinct or voting center is staffed so voting need not interfere with anybody’s work schedule, whether it is someone working multiple jobs or a senior executive.

The LWVMD, representing 1500+ concerned citizens throughout Maryland, urges a favorable report on SB683.