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**STATEMENT THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF
SB 683– ELECTION LAW – PERMANENT ABSENTEE BALLOT LIST,
BALLOT DROP BOXES, AND REPORT**

March 30, 2021

Get Money Out (GMOM) is an all-volunteer organization established eight years ago. We want all citizens to have equal access to the ballot and an equal say in governance. Through our grassroots actions, we have signed up over 9,000 supporters.

Under **SB 683** every citizen who is registered to vote could be placed on a permanent absentee ballot list and receive that absentee ballot by the voter's preferred method. One of our key goals at GMOM is to increase access to voting. Currently, if voters want to vote by mail, they must apply to receive a ballot for each election. This application process is an added hurdle that may impede citizens from voting by mail and, in many cases, from voting at all. In turn, this hinders the ability of various groups to vote – particularly the elderly.

One needs to look no further than a comparison of the 2016 and 2020 national election cycles to see the positive effects of increased access to mail-in-ballots. In 2016, voter turnout was about 60% whereas in 2020 it increased to 66%. This increase represents more than 20 million more people voting in this country. Maryland also saw an increase of about 71% to 74%. An increase in participation did not just come in the national election but also primary elections across numerous states. The data clearly show that vote-by-mail ballots increased national participation in the elections.

The pandemic was not the main reason people voted by mail. Pew Research found that 66 percent of people choose their method of voting by what they found to be most **convenient**. That is almost triple the 24% who decided their method of voting because of concern for the virus. It is no surprise that what people want is the easiest possible way to vote. Thus, if Maryland would remove its required application to vote-by-mail for each and every election, it would provide more convenience to voters and would result in more access to voting for a substantial fraction of the citizenry.

We believe in decreasing barriers to vote for every citizen. Due to this, we ask for a favorable report on **SB 683**.