

March 9, 2021

Testimony on HB 1038
State Board of Elections –Ballot Drop Boxes
Ways and Means

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 1038 which would make secure ballot drop boxes available in our elections. We took no position on the other components of the bill.

Drop boxes give voters a safe, secure method to return a mail-in ballot that is controlled and operated by the local boards of election, without requiring voters to visit an in-person site or use of mail. According to the State Board of Elections 2020 election final reports, 13% of voters used a ballot drop box to return their ballots in primary. About 2/3 of voters, over 1 million voters, who received a mail-in ballot used a ballot drop box to return their voted ballots during the general. Once more drop boxes were made available, voters overwhelmingly opted to return their ballot using this method and many have expressed wanting to continue using this method of delivery in future elections.

HB 1038 aims to make drop boxes a permanent staple in our elections. Similar to the previous election cycle, video surveillance or in-person security would be required. Election officials would also be required to collect ballots at least once a day that are managed with tight chain-of-custody controls.

Suggested amendment: During the 2020 general election, voters with disabilities reported not being able to access the drop boxes. We urge the committee to ensure the local boards of elections ensure accessibility when determining the placement of drop boxes. Also ensure they are ADA complaint.

HB 1038 will help to address voter issues with mail and will ultimately save counties money as the use of pre-paid postage decreases. We urge a favorable report.