

# Maryland PIRG

**Rishi Shah, Maryland PIRG Associate**

**Testimony for HB0760**

**Ways and Means Committee, Tuesday, February 16, 2021**

**Election Law - Time for Processing Absentee Ballots**

**Position: Favorable**

*Maryland PIRG is a state based, non-partisan, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state and a student funded, student directed chapter at the University of Maryland College Park. For forty five years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society. That includes a long history of working to help people register and vote.*

We support HB760 to allow local Boards of Elections to prepare mail-in ballots for tabulation 14 days before Election Day.

The 2020 election cycle featured an unprecedented number of voters casting their ballots via mail, with over 1.5 million Marylanders - around half of all ballots submitted - choosing to vote by mail. This spike in mail-in ballots led to Boards of Elections throughout the country getting quickly overwhelmed by the number of ballots that had to be counted.

We certainly expect mail-in ballot requests to decline as COVID-19 wanes. However, as many voters participated by mail for the first time this election and realized that mail-in voting is their preferred voting method, we expect more people to utilize mail-in voting in 2022 and 2024 than before. Allowing local Boards of Elections to prepare ballots to be counted on Election Day will speed up the rate at which they can tabulate results.

We respectfully request a favorable report.