

February 23, 2021

**Testimony on HB 1005**  
**Election Law - Early Voting Centers - Number Required**  
**Ways and Means**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 1005 which would alter the number of early voting centers required in jurisdictions with fewer than 125,000 registered voters, helping to provide greater access to early voting for growing communities throughout the state.

As mentioned in a 2020 article by WTOP news, providing only one voting center in certain jurisdictions during an election is a form of voter suppression. St. Mary's County is an example of a jurisdiction where very limited in-person options served as an inconvenience for many and a great nightmare for low-income voters and people of color. To add, the county strategically placed their only voting center in a location that was only accessible to about 65% of voters. The poor placement of the vote center left 35% of voters in the county created a hurdle for many residents of the county's southern region who rely on public transportation, and routes from towns like Lexington Park to this central location are lengthy and convoluted.

The Preamble to the United States Constitution justifiably states the phrase "We the People" in its opening line to strengthen the idea that the people are the ones who make a country. The people of the United States vote every four years to nominate the individual that they believe will uphold this preamble and its constitution. We must ask ourselves then, how can this be upheld when equal access is not given to the people? Members of counties like St. Mary's County should have more than one early voting center established so that voters will have an equal access to cast their ballot. Should this bill pass, St. Mary's County would not only have its central location in place, but another early voting center would be established to give those on the southern parts of the county this same privilege.

Early voting was established to drive participation and make voting more convenient. While the program has been a success and has seen a surge in the number of Marylanders voting early, we could get more participation with a more equitable placement of early voting sites.

As members of this democracy, we need to do everything we can to remove barriers to exercising the right to vote. HB 1005 aims to do that, and we urge a favorable report.