



*defending democracy using peaceful civil resistance*

February 19, 2021

**Testimony on HB 1048  
Election Law—Permanent Absentee Ballot List  
House Ways and Means**

**Position: Support**

Hold the Line Maryland supports House Bill 1048. Hold the Line Maryland is a grassroots, all-volunteer organization, dedicated to preserving and insuring democracy through diverse actions, including the support of campaign-finance reform, election protection measures, and the expansion of enfranchisement. HB 1048 meets our organization's mission because it: (i) requires that certain guidelines for absentee voting established by the State Board of Elections provide for a permanent absentee ballot list; (ii) provides that all voters are eligible for permanent absentee ballot status; (iii) requires a voter to complete and submit certain information to apply for permanent absentee ballot status; and (iv) prohibits a voter who has applied for permanent absentee ballot status from receiving an absentee ballot for the next election if the application is made after a certain deadline.

Hold the Line Maryland recognizes that the availability of strong, clear, and easily accessed elections means increased participation in our state's government, which in turn enhances the engagement between Maryland voters and their representatives and contributes to a sense of civic pride in our systems of government. Maryland is joining an increasing number of states that have instituted a permanent absentee ballot list and are seeking to make voting more accessible, less complicated, and exercisable on a longer timeline than a single election date.

HB1048 aligns the process of applying for and maintaining an absentee ballot list with updated communication tools, including email and texting in addition to traditional postal-service mail, as well as the receipt of the absentee ballot by facsimile or other electronic means. Finally, by maintaining a permanent absentee ballot list, HB1048 will decrease costs by easing the administrative burden related to routine requests for absentee ballots in every election cycle, which in turn increased accuracy and reduces the opportunity for administrative error (both by voters and election staff).

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB1048.

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Hold the Line Maryland