



## **TESTIMONY FOR HB0760 ELECTION LAW – TIME FOR PROCESSING ABSENTEE BALLOTS**

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Kaiser

**Committee:** Ways and Means

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0760 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members strongly support voting by mail, not only as a way to stay safe during the pandemic that we are currently struggling with, but to ensure that more people have access to vote. Voting in person is hard for people who don't have time off from work, or good transportation, or mobility.

As we saw during the last election cycle, voting by mail encouraged more people to participate in the election. But then came the long wait after election day. While states that canvassed their ballots early were able to quickly determine their vote count, other states that waited were overwhelmed with last-minute counting and a nation waiting for results.

This bill would allow local Boards of Elections to canvass 14 days earlier than election day. This is important because:

- Voters want to know that their ballots are accepted, or if they are rejected
- Voters want to know results quickly on election day

Many voters who used mail-in-voting for the first time this past election cycle waited and waited to know if their ballot would be counted, or if they needed to get in line to cast it in person. The earlier that determination and notification can be made, the better.

However, the downside is that the canvass results should not be known before everyone has had a chance to vote. This bill addresses that concern by prohibiting local Boards of Elections from publicizing the results before 8pm on election day, after the polls have closed.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.