



7338 Baltimore Ave
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Committee: Ways and Means
Testimony on: HB 1005 – Election Law – Early Voting Centers – Number Required
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 23, 2021

The Maryland Sierra Club urges a favorable report on HB 1005. This bill would increase from one to two the number of Early Voting Centers available for voters in counties that have more than 70,000 but fewer than 125,000 registered voters.

The Sierra Club and its members care about both the natural and human environments, including ending racial and social injustice. We believe that providing information about and access to registration and voting to all who are eligible should be viewed as fundamental to our democracy.

As a grassroots organization, the Sierra Club supports efforts to make voting as accessible and convenient as possible for all eligible voters, regardless of whether they choose to vote in person at Early Voting Centers or on election day or by mail. Early voting provides needed opportunities for those who choose to vote in person.

In August of 2020 the State Board of Elections approved two Early Voting Centers to be located in St. Mary's County. At its [September 4, 2020 meeting](#) the State Board received a request from the county election director to reduce that to one Early Voting Center located in the geographical center of the county but not conveniently located to the county's largest population center in the southern part of the county. After expressions of concern by State Board of Elections members of both political parties, the Board tabled the matter to allow time for St. Mary's County to obtain a second Early Voting Center location. The county did not do that despite a plea from the St. Mary's County Branch of the NAACP. After concluding that it had no other option under existing state law, the State Board approved the one location at its [September 11, 2020 meeting](#).

At the time of the 2020 general election St. Mary's County had 73,833 registered voters and would have been required to offer voters two Early Voting Centers if this bill had been law.

Voting is the foundation of our democracy, and we believe it is essential to racial and social justice to make registration and voting as accessible and convenient as possible for every individual who is eligible.

We urge a favorable report on HB 1005.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members.