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DNC Disability Council

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Support for H.B. 1020, Election Law-Curbside Voting Establishment

The DNC Disability Council is a grassroots advocacy organization that is committed to improving the quality of life for people with disabilities through improving and expanding voter access. Voting is the core fabric of our democracy. It is the fundamental right as a citizen to exercise your voice and opinion through voting. Oftentimes--people with disabilities encounter multiple voting barriers due to the lack of proper accommodations and access. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) helps to eliminate the challenges and barriers that voters who are disabled encounter. Title II (public entities) of the The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires state and local governments to ensure that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote. The ADA's provisions apply to all aspects of voting, including voter registration, site selection, and the casting of ballots, whether on Election Day or during an early voting process.

Since the inception of the Americans with Disabilities Act- Title II (public entities) people with disabilities have seen incremental improvements for voting--however--we remain the largest voting population that is either denied or unable to comfortably vote due to the lack of voting options. The **Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)** requires jurisdictions responsible for conducting federal elections to provide at least one accessible voting system for persons with disabilities at each polling place in federal elections. The accessible voting system must provide the same opportunity for access and participation, including privacy and independence, that other voters receive. One way to help increase voting participation, independence and access to vote for people with disabilities, is by adopting curbside voting. Curbside voting has become a very popular and effective apparatus for voters that are disabled.

As a person with a physical disability, I have had the pleasure of using curbside voting when I was a registered voter in the Commonwealth of Virginia. As a former constituent of the Commonwealth of Virginia, I saw first hand how effective the curbside voting measure was implemented during local and federal elections. The Commonwealth of Virginia saw a significant increase in voting participation from people with disabilities. Not only was curbside voting beneficial for voters that were disabled--it was also made available to senior citizens, pregnant women and veterans as an additional option and access to vote independently with privacy from the comforts of their vehicle. The curbside voting measure helped reduce voting rights violations and stress that voters that are disabled consistently experience during voting.

Several voters that are disabled, including myself like to vote on Election Day and should have the access and accommodations to be able to comfortably vote without having to be concerned about trying to stand in long lines, whether there is proper space in the voting booth or area, ineffective communication or training from poll workers when helping or assisting a voter that is disabled such as a voter that is blind and has encountered a voting machine that did not offer audio or large print ballots, or poll workers who were not trained to set up such features or troubleshoot malfunctions and failed to provide instructions on how to use the machine, having an intellectual or cognitive disability and being denied the right to vote by state law that reflects incorrect assumptions about your capabilities. Curbside voting can reduce voting violations for voters that are disabled immensely. This is why the DNC Disability Council and I vehemently support H.B. 1020, Election Law-Curbside Voting Establishment.

As a Maryland voter that is disabled, I should and want the same rights, access, privacy and independence to vote comfortably like every other voter in Maryland. Voters that are disabled, pregnant, senior citizens and veterans should be eligible and able to utilize curbside voting if they meet certain requirements--which is why I'm urging the Ways and Means Committee to support H.B. 1020, Election Law-Curbside Voting Establishment. I thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.