

EDUCATION, HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**February 22, 2022****SB 532 – Election Law – Polling Places – Proof of Identity****Position: OPPOSE**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM – formerly Maryland Disability Law Center) is the Protection & Advocacy agency in Maryland, mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM works to increase opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities to be part of their communities through voting by advocating for equal and equitable access to the ballot.

DRM opposes SB 532 which will require an election judge to establish a voter's identity by requiring the voter to present certain proof of identification such as a government-issued identification card. Voting is a fundamental right guaranteed to every citizen of the United States, however historically, certain groups have been excluded and disenfranchised from voting through a series of laws, regulations and practices such as voter identification laws. Voters of color, women and voters with disabilities particularly have had their right to vote threatened, removed, or unrealized due to legislation such as SB 532 that place excessive requirements on the voter to prove their identity prior to casting a ballot.

Voters with disabilities will bear an undue and unfair burden that threatens their access to voting if voter identification laws are enacted in Maryland. People with disabilities are twice as likely to not have a state issued identification compared to their peers¹. It is difficult for people with disabilities to obtain identification due to barriers to transportation, the financial costs to replace or obtain new identification, in addition to navigating the complex system to replace or obtain identification. It can be difficult to obtain those documents for those under the care of families, loved ones, those in facilities or receiving hired care who would have to coordinate to obtain their loved ones identification. Additionally, if a voter is registered to vote, their identity has already been verified. As such, requiring identification at the polling location is extraneous and unnecessary.

Currently, voters with disabilities already face numerous barriers to access the ballot such as inaccessible polling locations, drop boxes, untrained election judges, long voting lines, and much more. Requiring identification once a voter reaches a polling location is just an extra barrier that can discourage voters with disabilities from participating the electoral process, where their voice is already often stifled and unheard.

For these reasons DRM urges an unfavorable report on **SB 532**.

¹ <https://www.md-council.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Voting-Fact-Sheet.pdf>



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