

February 23, 2022

Testimony on SB 738
Secure Elections Act of 2022
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Unfavorable

Common Cause Maryland opposes SB 738 which would require the state Board of Elections and local boards to conduct an audit of absentee ballots cast in each statewide election, requiring that the audit consists of verifying a voter's signature.

The audit requiring the local board reaching out to (1) notify the voter that there is an issue with their signature and (2) get a new signature from a voter, seems to be a long, burdensome, and costly process. SB 738 does not seem to add any benefits to the already secure voting in place. SB 738 would impose an enormous and unjustified cost on the state.

Voting is celebrated as the most fundamental form of civic participation in a democracy, a means by which all voices are counted on an equal basis. Verifying a voter's signature on an absentee ballot is a burdensome requirement that potentially undermines the goal of civic participation by not allowing certain ballots to count due to an unsuccessful attempt to reach a voter in a timely manner.

In today's society, most documents are typed and electronically connected, our signatures are now in many instances written through a touch screen. Our signatures are constantly changing, and the signatures that we had when we registered to vote at 18 are most likely very different than the signature we use currently.

SB 738 seems to be based on the idea that there is a large-scale voter fraud being committed. In isolated instances where voter fraud does happen, local government bodies find them right away. There is only anecdotal evidence of voter fraud happening on a large scale, and without any evidence of proof that fraud is occurring on a large scale, there is no need for a costly type of measure like this.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report.