



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SB 163 – Election Law – Ballots – Processing and Reporting Procedures

POSITION: Favorable

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

DATE: January 26, 2022

The League of Women Voters of Maryland, a nonpartisan organization with over 1,500 members, advocates for election systems that increase voter participation and are feasible to implement, accessible, accountable, and enforceable. The League supports SB 163 because it will expand many of the administrative improvements enacted in 2021.

The unprecedented conditions of 2020 resulted in emergency changes to Maryland's election process, some of which were codified during the 2021 legislative session. For instance, support for the popular option of voting by mail was affirmed by establishing a permanent absentee voter list and assuring the continued use of convenient ballot drop boxes. Voting by mail, as opposed to voting at a polling place, is likely to increase in popularity rather than return to pre-2020 levels. Therefore, additional legislation is needed to ensure the continued smooth administration of our elections.

SB 163 includes many provisions to help accomplish this. We strongly support offering the local Boards of Elections the option to start processing mail-in ballots before Election Day. We also support giving voters a variety of means to "cure" a missing oath signature and prevent their ballot being rejected due to inadvertent error. Another provision in the bill requires election results to be reported by precinct. This granular information would not only be helpful to candidates but will also simplify auditing and make errors easier to detect.

This session is the last opportunity to finish enacting the improvements for the 2022 elections that were left undone at the end of last session.

The League urges a favorable report on SB 163.