



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS  
COMMITTEE**

**HB 862 – Election Law – Ballot Canvassing – Multiple Ballots Cast by an Individual**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**BY: Nancy Soreng, President**

**DATE: March 23, 2022**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland, a nonpartisan organization with 1500 members statewide, supports offering all registered voters the option of voting by mail (absentee). The League supports HB 862 because it will make permanent one of the valuable temporary procedures from the last election regarding how mail-in ballots are canvassed.

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, voters can now choose to be placed on a permanent absentee voter list, and the continued use of convenient ballot drop boxes has been assured. A return to pre-2020 levels of absentee voting is unlikely, however. For the 2022 elections, the Board of Elections (BOE) has already received hundreds of thousands of requests for mail-in ballots. Therefore, additional legislation is needed to ensure the continued smooth administration of our elections.

Before 2020, if more than one ballot was received from the same individual, the BOE would discard both. In 2020, however, many voters submitted multiple ballots out of justifiable concern that the U.S. Postal Service might not deliver their first ballot by the deadline. There was no intent to defraud the system, and the emergency regulation ensured that these Marylanders didn’t lose their votes completely.

HB 862 provides that the first legally sufficient ballot received will be counted, and any later-arriving ballot(s) rejected. No one would get a “do-over” on their votes, but neither would they be disenfranchised due to a simple error or innocent action.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 862.