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WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

February 8, 2022

HB 327 – Elections – Election Judges-Minimum Compensation

Position: SUPPORT

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 by advocating for economic justice through eliminating and reducing barriers to employment for people with disabilities.

DRM supports HB 327 which establishes a daily minimum of \$200 per day for election judges. Election judges play an important role during elections by ensuring rules and procedures set out by the State and Local Boards of Elections are followed. They spend a minimum of 12 hours at the polls, including set up and break down and ensuring Election Day runs as smoothly as it should to protect and actualize the promise of democracy. They essentially run Election Day and as such should be compensated fairly for their time and effort. Additionally, election judges can make or break a voter's experience at the polls, especially for voters with disabilities.

Currently, election judges throughout the State are compensated differently based on their county and type of judge they are, however, setting a minimum threshold for compensation will increase equity across the State. Additionally, it could incentivize more residents to become an election judge which is particularly important as some counties find it harder to employ election judges than others. Without the proper amount of election judges to serve a county, the voting experience is compromised.

Most importantly, election judges can make or break a voter's voting experience which can determine if they vote again. While election judges will interact with most voters, they can interact extensively with voters with disabilities who may need extra assistance. An election judge who is compensated and trained well is likely to be more pleasant, amicable, courteous and patient which voters with disabilities need.

For these reasons DRM urges a favorable report on **HB 327**.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at samuelaa@disabilityrightsmd.org or by phone at 443-356-6304