

March 8, 2022

**Testimony on HB 1283
Election Law – Municipal Corporations – Voter Qualifications
Ways and Means**

Position: Unfavorable

Common Cause is in opposition to HB 1283, which would prohibit non-US citizens from casting votes in municipal elections.

It is important to note that the targets of this legislation are residents of our state who have chosen to live, work, go to school, pay taxes, make connections, and raise families here. These voters are parents who send their children to public schools, renters, home and business owners that deserve to have a say in community policies that will have an effect on their families and their everyday lives. Non-citizens are counted for re-districting purposes, pay billions of dollars in taxes each year, and make up a large portion of the essential frontline workers that kept our communities running and healthy during the pandemic. It is only right that they have the opportunity to provide feedback on community issues that will affect them.

Opponents may raise the question of why an individual wouldn't just become a citizen if they want to vote. The overall naturalization process takes on average 6-8 years to complete, with the average time to process an application doubling since 2014. An individual must have a green card for at least five years and pay nearly a thousand dollars in processing fees, not including the cost of hiring a lawyer to help navigate the complicated U.S. immigration system. Long wait periods and administrative backlogs effectively lock residents out of the political process as they wait to hear back.

In the face of the wave of restrictive voter suppression laws washing over the country, Maryland should be looking to expand voting rights to include all eligible members of our community in our political process. For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report.