

Testimony of Philip Wilk

February 15, 2022

Ways and Means Committee

HB 629: Election Law - Polling Places and Early Voting Centers - Electronic Devices

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Atterbeary and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 629.

My name is Philip Wilk and I am a resident of Montgomery County. I was turned away at my polling station a couple of years ago. I was turned away because all the notes I brought had been prepared on an electronic mobile device, which I brought with me. All voters at the Fallsmead Elementary School voting location were confronted when walking in the door and asked about their mobile devices.

At issue is a state regulation prohibiting electronic devices from being used in polling places. While this apparently is an old regulation, nobody could tell me why it was being selectively being enforced this time or why the regulation even existed in the first place. If this were to enhance security, it would be ineffective as it would rely on a person with malicious intentions to self-identify at the polling location. If this were to prevent recording of a marked ballot, the regulation should simply state this and not preclude the use of electronics for other informed-electorate purposes. I think it's a good thing to prohibit photographing ballots and the regulation should simply state this, if this indeed is the original intent.

When I was suddenly not allowed access to my electronic notes for the purpose of completing my ballot, it came as a complete shock. While I could have printed out my notes at home and returned to the polling station at a later time, I was not able to due to my childcare responsibilities; I had already budgeted all the time I could for voting. I was not able to vote and I should have been able to cast my ballot while referring to my notes on my mobile device. This ill-conceived rule has no place in the 21st century.

Other states allow the use of mobile devices in polling stations and some states actively encourage use in this manner as they wish to promote an informed electorate, as I wish Maryland would.

For these reasons, I respectfully request the committee for a favorable report on HB 629.