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Judiciary Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 15, 2022

The Honorable Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary

Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee

6 Bladen Street, Room 131

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 1404

Good afternoon, Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee. I am Delegate Nicole Williams of District 22, and I will be testifying today in favor of **House Bill 1404**, also known as **Election Law - Curbside Voting - Establishment**. This legislation would make curbside voting an option to people with disabilities and expecting mothers by requiring local election boards to establish at least one accessible voting location in each county and in Baltimore City .

This legislation comes at a time where voting rights are increasingly under attack in various states across the country. In the past year alone, 19 states have passed 33 separate laws to scale back the right to vote. In Georgia, for example, it was made a crime to pass out food or water to people waiting in line to vote. In Iowa and Kansas, laws were passed to impose a criminal penalty on anyone found to be returning ballots for voters in need of assistance, such as those with disabilities. It is incredible to see that in the 21st century, after decades of advocacy to protect the right to vote, laws are still being passed to make voting less accessible to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Here in Maryland, we have the opportunity to incorporate more people into our electoral process by establishing a curbside voting option. This bill is based on Virginia House Bill 1998, which was introduced in the 2009 legislative session to expand voting access. Other states, such as North Carolina, Missouri, Texas, and Wisconsin have also sought to increase the accessibility of the ballot box by establishing curbside voting.

I know that there are still some organizations that have some concerns with the current form of the bill such as the National Federation of the Blind. I will work with them to address their concerns but I do feel strongly that we should give serious consideration toward the implementation of this policy for future elections even if this bill does not pass this session.

The sole intention of this bill is to make it easier for people in our state to exercise the right to vote. Everyone should be guaranteed the fundamental right to participate in our democratic process. Voting, as we all know, is the single most effective and important thing a person can do to make their voices be heard. By establishing curbside voting in Maryland, we can ensure that Marylanders that are expecting or have a disability can practice their right to vote in the way that works best for them.

For these reasons, I urge this committee to give a favorable report on House Bill 1404.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole A. Williams, Esq." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, Esq.