

Maryland PIRG

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Testimony for SB0163
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Tuesday, January 25th, 2022
Election Law – Ballots – Processing and Reporting Procedures
Position: Favorable

Maryland PIRG is a state-based, non-partisan, citizen-funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state and a student-funded, student-directed chapter at the University of Maryland College Park. For fifty years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society.

We support SB 163 to improve the administration of our elections systems. This legislation is nearly identical to [HB 329](#), which this committee held a hearing on two weeks ago.

SB 163 responds to the increase of mail-in voting seen in the 2020 elections by creating a ballot curing process, where Marylanders who mistakenly did not sign their mail-in ballot can do so after sending it in. It also makes adjustments to elections administration that improve the function of our elections by enabling early processing of ballots and requiring precinct level reporting

A ballot curing process is important to ensure that Marylanders who intend to vote are able to vote. Of all rejected mail-in ballots in Maryland during the 2020 general election, [42% of these ballots were rejected because they were not signed by the voter](#), totalling to 1,552 total rejected ballots. During the June 2020 primary, [3,290 ballots were rejected because of a lack of signature](#), totalling nearly 5,000 voters throughout 2020. When possible, voters should be alerted to a missed signature and be given the opportunity to fix it.

[18 states already have statutes that require voters to receive notice if there is a missing signature or signature discrepancy on their mail-in ballot](#), and it's time for Maryland to join them. Nobody should lose their voice in our democracy because they forgot to sign a piece of paper.

Additionally, enabling local boards of elections to tabulate ballots before Election Day is crucial as we see an increase in vote by mail both because it speeds up the timeline for results to be certified, increasing public confidence in the electoral process.

We respectfully request a favorable report.