

March 8, 2022

Testimony on HB 963
Election Law – Absentee Ballots – Signature Verification and Verification Statements and
Unsigned Ballot Statements
Ways and Means

Position: Unfavorable

Common Cause Maryland is in strong opposition to HB 963, which would require more stringent and burdensome proof of identification and signature requirements for mail-in voting, effectively shutting qualified voters out of our election process.

Maryland law already requires individuals registering to vote to swear, under penalty of perjury, that they are a citizen. Adding new documentation requirements threatens to slow down the ballot request process for registered voters and make it impossible for our most vulnerable populations to engage in their civic rights. Those without ID are disproportionately likely to be Black, Latino, low-income, young people, senior citizens, and people with disabilities. For many of these eligible voters it is difficult or even impossible to obtain ID.

It's important to note that legislation of this nature aims to solve a problem that is effectively non-existent in our state— voter fraud. A of myriad studies over the past 20 years have shown virtually no evidence of voter fraud. What these studies have revealed is that in jurisdictions where these needless policies have been enacted, there has been a significant negative impact on the ability of countless eligible voters to have their voices heard. It is clear that the risk of disenfranchisement of vulnerable communities outweighs the evidence of voter fraud occurring in Maryland.

As we have seen in other states, signature verification requirements have the potential to further disenfranchise already marginalized populations throughout the state – including voters with disabilities, voters whose first language is not English, elderly voters, young voters, LGBTQ+ voters, and more.

Common Cause Maryland supports a robust, secure election system that encourages the maximum participation among voters in the state. HB 963 does nothing to advance those goals and would likely create significant burdens to their achievement. For those reasons, we urge the committee to give HB 963 an unfavorable report.