

February 15, 2022

**Testimony on HB 702**  
**Election Judges – Training and Signs – Accommodations for Voters in Need of Assistance**  
**Ways and Means**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland support HB 702 which would improve the process for training election judges on the methods used to assist or accommodate elderly and disabled voters as well as require the State Board of Elections to make clear signage available in the following locations: outside of the entrance of the building, inside of polling sites, and near the check-in desk. The multiple sign locations will ensure voters are made aware of the assistance available to them when voting. We recommend not limiting the specific sizing of the sign itself so that it leaves flexibility as to where the sign is posted.

Election judges play a vital role in our elections. They ensure fair and accessible elections for all Marylanders and are trained to protect the integrity of the election process. While many Marylanders stepped up to serve in the critical role during the 2020 election, the recruitment and adequate training of judges has long been an issue in the state. This has led to reports of polls opening late, long lines, judges failing to show up on election days and a number of other incidents – including elderly voters and those voters with disabilities not being provided with adequate assistance or even being made aware of the assistance available to them when voting.

HB 702 aims to address these by not only ensuring election judges receive improved training on how to apply these methods, but also that voters are made aware of the assistance available to them when at a polling site. We found that during the 2020 general election, voters were unaware they could have a placeholder in the instances where they are unable to stand for long periods of time, as well as other options available to them. The additional signage would help to address this, and we encourage images to be incorporated for those voters who are unable to read. Making these signs available in multiple languages will also ensure voters whose first language is not English are also made aware of the assistance available to them.

This bill will help ensure future Maryland elections run smoothly, especially for elderly and disabled voters who vote in person.

We urge a favorable report.