

HB 538 - Voters' Rights Protection Act of 2022.pdf

Uploaded by: Aleksandra Petrovic

Position: FAV

February 15, 2022

**Testimony on HB 538 –
Voters' Rights Protection Act of 2022
Ways and Means**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 538, which would expand early voting in Maryland to include the Sunday before the election.

Democracy works best when all eligible persons are able to participate and make their voices heard. Early voting allows more opportunities to get to the polls – easing or eliminating problems for those who cannot make it to vote on Election Day.

Early voting has proven tremendously popular in Maryland. Given that early voting has proven to be a success, it can be assumed that adding an additional day will also be helpful for bringing voters to the polls. According to the 2020 report by the Maryland State Board of Elections, the percentage of voters taking advantage of early voting is steadily increasing. As the state strives to engage more voters in our elections, it is important to provide opportunities for voters to cast their ballots at a time and on a schedule that works with busy lives, long work hours, and other barriers to voting on Election Day.

Common Cause Maryland recognizes the concerns by the State Board of Elections that the current poll book technology would struggle to accommodate early voting too close to Election Day. We are open to support any amendments that SBE feels are needed to ensure that implementation will go smoothly.

We support expanding early voting to ensure that all voters have ample opportunity to get to the polls, and HB 538 is an important part of that reform.



2022-02-11 HB 538 (Support).pdf

Uploaded by: Hannibal Kemerer

Position: FAV

BRIAN E. FROSH
Attorney General



ELIZABETH F. HARRIS
Chief Deputy Attorney General

CAROLYN QUATTROCKI
Deputy Attorney General

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

FACSIMILE NO.

WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NO.

410-576-6584

February 15, 2022

To: The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbary
Chair, Ways and Means Committee

From: The Office of the Attorney General

Re: HB 538 – The Voting Rights Protection Act of 2022 – **Support**

The Office of Attorney General (the "OAG") urges this Committee to favorably report HB 538.

House Bill 538 would extend early voting from 8 to 11 days so that it ends on the Sunday before Election Day rather than the Thursday before Election Day. Early Voting is popular with voters, and provides an in-person voting opportunity for voters whose employment, family, or other obligations may make voting difficult on Election Day. Extending the early voting period to encompass the weekend before Election Day gives voters for whom work-week voting may be difficult an additional opportunity, immediately preceding the election, to cast their ballots in person.

For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General urges a favorable report on House Bill 538.

cc: Members of the Ways and Means Committee

Testimony HB 538_Rosenberg.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Sutton

Position: FAV

SAMUEL I. "SANDY" ROSENBERG
Legislative District 41
Baltimore City

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Chair

Government Operations and
Health Facilities Subcommittee

House Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Respond to Office Indicated

☐ *Annapolis Office*

The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 365
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3297 • 301-858-3297
800-492-7122 Ext. 3297
Samuel.Rosenberg@house.state.md.us

☐ *District Office*

4811 Liberty Heights Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21207
410-664-2646

Testimony of Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg

Before the House Ways and Means Committee

In Support of House Bill 538

Voters' Rights Protection Act of 2022

"I've pledged that as long as I'm in a position to uphold the Constitution, no barrier will come between our citizens and the voting booth."

- *Ronald Reagan upon signing an extension of the 1965 Voting Rights Act*

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Right to Vote is an integral part of how Americans define our democracy. Whether voting for local representatives, state level officials, or in national elections, casting a ballot is one of the most accessible and essential ways for Americans to participate in their government.

House Bill 538 would expand Maryland's in-person, early voting window to include two Sundays. Currently, early voting starts on the second Thursday before an election and ends the Thursday prior to the election. With the amendment I am offering today, HB 538 would begin the voting period on the second Sunday prior to an election or primary and conclude the following Sunday. The early voting window would remain open for eight days.

This modification is crucial to ensure better access to the ballot box for all Marylanders, not just those fortunate enough to make it to the polls on Election Day, or the day of a primary.

Crucially, two of these additional early voting days are on the weekend. Instead of only two days of weekend early voting, the change proposed by HB 538 would mandate four days of weekend early voting. This is important for those who are unable to take off work, have children or eldercare obligations, or are otherwise unable to make it to their polling place during the week.

The change is also important because it allows people to participate in early voting just prior to the election or primary. Voters who make their decision the weekend before an election or primary must have just as much access to the polls as people who decided weeks before.

In recent months, Sunday voting has come under attack nationwide. Sundays have particular importance historically in America, specifically because prior to the Civil War, enslaved people were sometimes allowed to travel, make their own clothing, prepare food for themselves, and even attend church services on Sundays.¹ Even after slavery ended, mail delivery used to take place on Sundays, leading people to collect their mail and converse with each other after Sunday worship.² Although mail is no longer delivered on Sundays the spirit of community engagement after Sunday worship lives on in the “Souls to the Polls” movement.³ Elected officials in Maryland should embrace this effort to encourage a historically disenfranchised group to organize and vote.

It is important to remember that the goal of an election should be to ascertain the will of the people by having as many registered voters casting a ballot as possible. The goal should not be to explain why these registered voters should have made it to the voting booth on Election Day.

Even as some states seek to roll back Sunday voting, others are already providing their citizens with the option to vote on the Sunday before elections and primaries. Large states like New York,⁴ New Jersey,⁵ Illinois, and Ohio already provide for voting the weekend before elections. Smaller states like our neighbors in Delaware also allow for in person early voting for ten days, “up to and including the Saturday and Sunday immediately before an election.”⁶ Other states that send ballots to all registered voters allow those mail-in ballots to be returned on dates up to Election Day. Still others, like Michigan and Wisconsin allow for local elections officials to make the decision whether to open polling places on the Sunday prior to elections.

Nothing worth doing is easy. But allowing ballots to be cast up until the Sunday prior to an election is important, and worth doing.

I urge a favorable report on this bill.

February 15, 2022

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/03/04/attacking-sunday-voting-is-part-long-tradition-controlling-black-americans/>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/03/04/attacking-sunday-voting-is-part-long-tradition-controlling-black-americans/>

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/03/04/attacking-sunday-voting-is-part-long-tradition-controlling-black-americans/>

⁴ <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/ELN/8-600>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/29/nyregion/new-jersey-voting-rights.html>

⁶ 15 Del. C. § 5402.

HB0538_Represent_Maryland_FAVORABLE.pdf

Uploaded by: Justin Gallardo

Position: FAV



BILL NUMBER: HB0538
BILL TITLE: Voters' Rights Protection Act of 2022
BILL SPONSOR: Delegate Samuel Rosenberg
POSITION: FAVORABLE

February 15, 2022

Honorable Chairwoman Vanessa Atterbeary, Vice-Chairman Alonzo Washington, and Ways and Means Committee Members:

Represent Maryland supports this bill to simplify dates and to standardize early voting hours. Voting should be easy, swift, and without confusion; therefore, we ask for a favorable report!

Sincerely,

Justin Gallardo, Volunteer
Represent Maryland
Legislative District 8

Represent Maryland is a grassroots anti-corruption group of citizen advocates that #FightForDemocracy in Maryland. Our democracy solutions include: Public Election Funds, Independent Redistricting, Special Elections, Ranked Choice Voting, Increased Ethics and Transparency, and Increased Voter Participation. Learn more about our work at www.RepresentMaryland.org

Authorized by Represent Maryland PAC, T Miler, Treasurer

HB0538-WM_MACo_OPP.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Kinnally

Position: UNF



House Bill 538

Voters' Rights Protection Act of 2022

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: February 15, 2022

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 538.

This bill would require each early voting center to be open for three additional days for each primary and general election. **MACo does not raise policy objections with this goal – county concerns are merely practical and cost-driven.**

This bill places a substantial administrative and cost burden onto local boards of elections, whose functions are supported by county funding. Without state resources to offset these substantial costs, the bill represents an unfunded mandate on local governments.

Early voting centers entail substantial costs for equipment purchases/leases, equipment storage and transportation, staff compensation and training, and other overhead. These costs are nearly fully borne by the county governments.

As a rule, MACo resists policies that trigger costly or burdensome local implementation. If expanding in-person early voting is a top priority for state policymakers, legislation should provide the needed funding for additional equipment and related expenses, and resources to offset the resulting staff and operations costs for local boards of elections and their administration.

Under current law, counties have no choice but to fund these costs – competing for limited local funds against public health, schools, public safety, roadway maintenance, and other essential public services.

This bill would place a costly mandate on county governments to carry out new state policy. Accordingly, without the proper funding and resources to suitably implement the bill's requirements, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 538.