

February 15, 2022

Support: HB702

Election Judges - Training and Signs - Accommodations for Voters in Need of Assistance

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice-chair Washington, and Committee Members,

HB702

- Requires that training for election judges include oral instruction and written material on a range of methods that may be used to assist or accommodate elderly and disabled voters in voting;
- Ensures that judges assigned to a voting site are made aware of the accommodations available at that site;
- Requires that the specific methods of accommodation available to a voter in need of assistance at each voting site be prominently displayed so that a voter in need of assistance can be aware of the accommodation options available.

This body, and this committee in particular, has done important work over the years in ensuring the right of eligible voters to exercise the franchise and this bill is one small but important part of completing that work. While the state and local election boards do provide accommodations for disabled, elderly, and others voters who need it, but they vary from site to site. Voters are not always clear as to what kind of assistance is possible and are sometimes too embarrassed or discourage to ask.

Worse, there have been times when a well-meaning poll worker has failed to offer an available accommodation because they either did not know about it or did not think about it in the moment. Although these occasions are likely rare, they need not occur at all. HB702 aims to make such incidents a thing of the past.

It is not prescriptive as to the type of accommodations that should be offered. The local boards retain the discretion to make those determinations. It simply requires that that information be available to the voter without their having to ask, and that the workers be aware of them too.

The bill was combined with a similar bill and passed the House last session but not the Senate. The other sponsor and I believe that this stripped down bill should be able to pass both chambers as it will allow the voters to benefit without being particularly burdensome on the local election boards in an otherwise very busy year for them.

I urge a favorable report on HB702.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "T. J. ...", is located at the bottom left of the page.

