

February 22, 2022

Testimony on HB 939
Elections – Absentee Ballots – Mailing of Unrequested Ballots
Ways and Means

Position: Unfavorable

Common Cause Maryland opposes HB 939 which would prohibit the State Board of Elections, each local board, and municipalities from automatically mailing absentee ballot to any voter who has not requested an absentee ballot. Common Cause opposes HB 939 because this legislation aims to address an issue that does not exist because voters are not automatically mailed ballots against their will.

2020 was a unique election year because of the pandemic. As the state worked on flattening the curve, Governor Hogan took the right steps and put in an emergency order that mandated that voters automatically receive their ballots. The ballots were then only sent to eligible voters and voters were still provided with opportunities to vote in person, if they needed to. This was a measure taken during a public health crisis, COVID-19.

Rockville is an example of a municipality where legislation was passed, and for the first time in 2018, conducted a mail-in voting election. If a legislation was passed, that means the voters of that municipality were provided with an opportunity to weigh in. Outside of that, any other ballots that were automatically mailed to voters in 2020, have all been emergency orders that were put in order by a municipality because of the public health crisis we are experiencing.

Because HB 939 aims to address an issue that is not currently present, we urge an unfavorable report.