

SB 488 Election Law – Electronic Ballot Return System - Study and Request for Proposals
Testimony to the Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
Michelle Taube, Favorable

Committee hearing February 24, 2023

Dear Committee Chair Feldman and distinguished Committee members,

My name is Michelle Taube. I am a Montgomery County voter. I moved to Copenhagen, Denmark 15 years ago to take a job at the National Museum of Denmark. I travel back to Maryland at least once every year to visit family and friends, and I keep up with current events. I vote in every election because I feel a close connection to Maryland and the US.

I always ask to receive my blank ballot electronically so that I do not have to worry about delays or about it getting lost in the mail. But, I do not have that luxury in returning my voted ballot. All I can do is put it in the post and hope that it doesn't get damaged or stuck to another envelope and that it is received on time.

I am fortunate to live in a country with a reliable postal system. However, as Denmark has gone more electronic, many of the postboxes have been removed. Collection at the few that remain is usually only once a week, so it is necessary to make a special trip to a postal counter to send my voted ballot.

One of the worst parts about having to return my voted ballot by mail is that the timing makes it difficult to be an informed voter. As an overseas voter, I receive my ballot 45 days before Election Day, but voting guides typically only come out about 30 days before the election. It is difficult to balance the timing of voting and returning my ballot with learning about the issues on the ballot.

My friends who vote in states that utilize electronic ballot return have the possibility of waiting until almost the last minute to return their voted ballots. In fact, I know a voter who had just moved to Denmark, but was able to request, vote, and return her ballot on Election Day itself. I am glad that Maryland has a generous ballot receipt deadline, but I don't dare to wait until the last minute to send my ballot.

Thank you for the opportunity to add my testimony. I hope that the legislature passes this bill and that the proposed study leads to an electronic ballot return system for Maryland.

Sincerely yours,
Michelle Taube

Votes in: Montgomery County (district 16)
Resides in: Copenhagen, Denmark