

**March 23, 2023**

**Testimony on HB 410  
Election Reform Act of 2023  
Energy, Education, and the Environment**

**Position:** Favorable with Amendments

Common Cause Maryland is in favor of HB 410, which creates a reasonable framework to govern changes to polling place locations and protect local boards of elections against frivolous and coordinated Public Information Act requests.

The bill requires local boards of elections to first hold a public meeting to discuss proposed changes to the location of a polling place and provide an opportunity for interested individuals and organizations to give testimony on the proposal. The local board would also be required to maintain a contact list of certain elected officials and neighborhood groups who are to be informed of proposed changes if they are to occur more than 21 day before an election.

Additionally, HB 410 would authorize the State Board of Elections and local boards of elections to temporarily deny a Public Information Act request received within 90 days of a primary or general election and until Certification if the custodian believes that the request would impair the ability of the board to prepare for the election. We believe that this is a limited exception to the standard policy of open requests is a necessary trade-off to ensure that State and local boards have the time and resources to reasonably fulfill the requests without interfering with the administration of the election.

HB 410 provides necessary policy changes that bring us closer to our shared ideal of fair, open, and transparent elections. For these reasons, we would request a favorable report on the bill.