

# Maryland PIRG

## HB535: Election Law – Ballots – Processing and Reporting Procedures

Ways and Means

February 14, 2023

Emily Scarr, Maryland PIRG

Favorable

*Maryland PIRG is a state based, small donor funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state. We work to find common ground around common sense solutions that will help ensure a healthier, safer, more secure future.*

We support this bill to improve the administration of our elections systems..

This bill is a needed response to the increase of mail-in voting seen in recent elections. It creates a ballot curing process, where Marylanders who mistakenly did not sign their mail-in ballot envelope can do so after sending it in. It also makes adjustments to elections administration that improve the function of our elections by enabling early processing of ballots and requiring precinct level reporting

Enabling local boards of elections to tabulate ballots before Election Day is crucial as we see an increase in vote by mail both because it speeds up the timeline for results to be certified, increasing public confidence in the electoral process.

A ballot curing process is important to ensure that Marylanders who intend to vote are able to vote. Of all rejected mail-in ballots in Maryland during the 2020 general election, [42% of these ballots were rejected because they were not signed by the voter](#), totalling to 1,552 total rejected ballots. During the June 2020 primary, [3,290 ballots were rejected because of a lack of signature](#), totalling nearly 5,000 voters throughout 2020. In 2022, the State Board of Elections adopted regulations requiring local boards to notify voters who forgot to sign their oath, which meant [419 voters](#) were able to sign their oath so their ballots were accepted. When possible, voters should be alerted to a missed signature and be given the opportunity to fix it. This process should be codified into law.

[18 states already have statutes that require voters to receive notice if there is a missing signature or signature discrepancy on their mail-in ballot](#), and it's time for Maryland to join them. Nobody should lose their voice in our democracy because they forgot to sign a piece of paper.

We respectfully request a favorable report.