

**Witness:** Jean Miceli Benhoff

**Jurisdiction:** Baltimore County

**Bill:** HB0022 Election Law-Absentee Ballots-Signature Requirements and Verification

**Position:** FOR

I respectfully suggest to you, the MD Legislature, that Prohibiting a local board of elections from removing an absentee ballot from a return envelope or ballot/return envelope or counting the ballot unless the return envelope or ballot/return envelope is signed by the voter and, except under certain circumstances, a witness, and the local board verifies the voter's signature on a mail-in ballot is both prudent and fiscally conservative. Why am I FOR HB0022 you may wonder?

**Prudent:** This law will protect ALL voters by insuring that each and every mail-in vote is in fact verified as true and thus not disenfranchising voters who cast their ballots in good faith their vote will be counted and not voided by a less-than-honest voter. This law will include a way for voters who truly forget to sign by allowing a cure, and this will not apply to military.

“The most common method to verify that absentee/mail ballots come from the intended voter is to conduct signature verification. When voters return an absentee/mail ballot, they must sign an affidavit on the ballot envelope. When the ballot is returned to the election office, election officials have a process for examining each and every signature and comparing it to other documents in their files that contain the voter signature—usually the voter registration record.

If a ballot is missing a signature or the signature does not match the one on file, some states offer voters the opportunity to “cure” their ballots. The election official will contact the voter explaining the problem and asking them to verify their information and that that they did in fact cast the ballot. See Table 15: States with Signature Cure Processes for more details.

Some states have other methods for verifying absentee/mail ballots, such as requiring voters to provide a copy of an identification document or to have the absentee/mail ballot witnessed or notarized.

Twenty-seven states conduct signature verification on returned absentee/mail ballots:

Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington and West Virginia.”

**Fiscally Responsible:** This law will protect each and every legal vote in each and every (24) local jurisdictions thus the State of MD by not inflating the vote count totals with invalidly submitted ballots. Further, Canvassing after elections is dominantly conducted by local BOE’s with the use of volunteers: democrat, independent and republican. Local boards do supervise this very important function. Thousands if not *millions of dollars are saved* over each election cycle across Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions by the thousands of citizen volunteers.

**Sources:** <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/table-14-how-states-verify-voted-absentee-mail-ballots>; [https://ballotpedia.org/How do states verify absentee/mail-in ballots%3F \(2022\)](https://ballotpedia.org/How_do_states_verify_absentee/mail-in_ballots%3F_(2022))