

**March 7, 2023**

**Testimony on HB 1216  
Election Law - Voting - Proof of Identity  
Ways and Means**

**Position: Unfavorable**

Common Cause Maryland opposes HB 1216, which would require proof of identity to vote. Voting is celebrated as the most fundamental form of civic participation in a democracy, a means by which all voices are counted on an equal basis. Restrictive and burdensome photo identification requirements undermine this goal because they prevent eligible voters from participating, impose enormous and unjustified costs on states, and do not achieve the goals they claim to work towards.

Studies show that those without ID are disproportionately likely to be Black, Latino, young or elderly, come from a low-income household, have a disability, or be part of the LGBTQ+ community. For many of these eligible voters, it is no simple matter to obtain the necessary ID — the hurdles involved can make doing so difficult or impossible.

One of the documentation requirements for obtaining an ID from the MD Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) is a certified copy of one's birth certificate. However, many people (and especially members of vulnerable communities like people of color, people from low-income households, LGBTQ+ people, etc.) do not have their birth certificate, have lost it, or never had one in the first place. Even if an individual has a copy of their certified birth certificate, the lack of a driver's license or access to reliable transportation keeps many eligible voters from accessing MVA offices which often have long wait-times and restricted operational hours.

The risk of disenfranchisement is far greater than the evidence of voter fraud in Maryland. Millions of citizens residing in states that have enacted these restrictive and burdensome laws do not currently possess the requisite photo ID needed to vote. And while there is anecdotal evidence of voter fraud, there is no proof that fraud is occurring on a scale that would necessitate this type of measure – or outweigh the risks these laws pose to eligible voters from vulnerable communities.

HB 1216 would roll back fundamental protections that allow all registered voters to engage in our democratic process.

We strongly urge an unfavorable report.