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## WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

February 23, 2023

### HB 1200 – Elections – Election Judges-Minimum Compensation

Position: **SUPPORT**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM – formerly Maryland Disability Law Center) is the Protection & Advocacy agency in Maryland, mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. Our mission is to advance the civil rights of persons with disabilities. We work to ensure that people with disabilities are able to fully participate in civic life, including the electoral process.

DRM **supports** HB 1200 which establishes a daily minimum of \$250 per day for election judges. Election judges play an important role during elections by ensuring rules and procedures set out by the State and Local Boards of Elections are followed. They spend a minimum of 12 hours at the polls, including set up and break down and ensuring Election Day runs as smoothly as it should to protect and actualize the promise of democracy. They essentially run Election Day and as such should be compensated fairly for their time and effort.

An election judge who is fairly compensated and well trained is more likely to be pleasant, amicable, courteous, patient, and perform their responsibilities, including ensuring equal access to voting for persons with disabilities. Currently, election judges throughout the State are compensated differently based on their county and type of judge they are, however, setting a minimum threshold for compensation will increase equity across the State. This bill will incentivize more residents to become an election judge which is particularly important as some counties find it harder to employ election judges than others. Without the proper amount of election judges to serve a county, the voting experience is compromised.

Most importantly, election judges can make or break a voter's voting experience which can determine if they vote again. While election judges will interact with most voters, they can interact extensively with voters with disabilities who may need support in accessing voting. HB 1200 recognizes the important role of election judges in our elections and provides appropriate remuneration for this role.

For these reasons DRM urges a **favorable** report on **HB 1200**.

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