



## **TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

### **HB 1092 – Election Law – Early Voting – Number of Days**

**POSITION: Opposed**

**BY: Nancy Soreng – President**

**Date: March 7, 2023**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes that our election system should ensure voters' participation. The state law should specify that a Saturday and a Sunday be included in early voting days. However, House Bill 1092 would eliminate those weekend days by altering the number of days on which early voting centers are required to be open before a primary or general election.

A program started in the 1990s called "Souls to the Polls" is a concentrated effort at Black Churches to encourage voter registration, to increase voter turnout and to protect against efforts to suppress the vote. This program has been a tradition at many Black Churches in Maryland to transport their members to the polls, thus allowing access to the polls on Sundays.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), forty-six states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands offer early in-person voting. Our neighboring state, Virginia, allows forty-five days of early voting including Saturdays and Sundays.

The League recognizes that voting patterns are evolving. The proportions of ballots cast by mail, in person during early voting, and in person on Election Day are changing as new options become available and circumstances change. In the future, the data may suggest making changes to early voting, but for 2024, early voting should be kept at eight days, including weekends.

Therefore, the League of Women Voters of Maryland urges an unfavorable report on HB 1092.