

Testimony on HB 35
Elections - In-Person Voting - Proof of Identity
Ways & Means

Position: Unfavorable

Common Cause Maryland opposes HB 35, 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 persons, 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 to obtaining an ID from the DMV is a certified copy of your 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 DMV 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 risk these laws pose to eligible voters from vulnerable communities.

HB 35 would roll back basic protections that allow all registered voters to engage in our democratic process, and for those reasons we urge an unfavorable report.