

**HB0022- Election Law – Absentee Ballots – Signature Requirements and Verification
Ways and Means Committee
January 31, 2023**

Position: Oppose

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). We are writing in opposition of HB0022 as we believe this legislation may depress the opportunity for people with IDD to exercise the right to vote and have their votes count in an election.

A voter's signature can vary for many reasons. Voters with disabilities and older adults, some of whom also have disabilities, may be more inclined to vote using an absentee ballot due to mobility or other access considerations. Some disabilities are degenerative and some people with disabilities experience periodic physical changes (such as tremors and/or muscle weakness, or loss of motor control) that may change the way a person signs their name. We are familiar with some individuals with IDD who used to sign their name legibly at one time, but who sign their name differently now; some even using just a letter or symbol to indicate their signature. Their votes should not be considered any less valid.

We acknowledge the need to protect the democratic process and believe that Maryland is committed to expanding initiatives that would improve access and opportunity for people with disabilities to vote. We feel this bill would hinder our forward movement and present unnecessary barriers to voting for people who lack the ability/function to use a consistent signature to indicate their intentions. We respectfully ask the committee for an unfavorable report on HB0022.

Sincerely,



Ande Kolp

Executive Director

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