

Name: Ms Melanie Gardner
Testimony for House Bill 645 Position: Favorable
Date: February 28, 2023
Maryland House Ways & Means Committee

Committee Chair Atterbeary and Esteemed Committee members,

My name is Melanie Gardner, and I am a Montgomery County voter living in Ottawa, Canada. I moved here to join my husband in 2018. I am a lifelong voter, and take pride in voting in every election. From the US Senate to the Board of Education, having my voice heard and my vote counted matters.

As a Maryland voter and US Citizen living abroad, passing House Bill 645 is very important to me. While it may not seem like a long distance, voting from Canada has not always been easy for me to do. The 2020 election cycle was particularly stressful. In frustration, I reached out to friends and family about postal service times they were experiencing as I prepared to mail my ballot back.

In the end, what normally takes 7 to 10 days ended up being over a five-week long process. I do not look back fondly at the many times I had to call my Board of Elections about my ballot's status. Four days prior to the election, I filled out a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot, as is my Federally protected right to do, paid to send and sent it by UPS as an overnight delivery. After so much uncertainty, both ballots arrived the day before the election and my vote was counted. I experienced the same in 2022.

I am deeply appreciative for Delegate Feldmark introducing HB 645 because it means there is a possibility in the future for Maryland voters like me to have their ballots be returned by electronic submission. Respectfully, I ask you to please pass HB 645 so that hopefully I do not have to endure this stressful experience again.

Thank you for your time, and for allowing me to share my voting experience in Maryland from abroad.

Sincerely,

Ms Melanie Gardner
Montgomery County Voter in Ottawa, Canada