

Testimony For SB0772

Please vote for SB0772.

I believe that with so many people casting doubts about the integrity of our elections, the legislature should take steps to improve the process. One way to overcome this perception is to establish voter identity. This bill would do that.

Last year, the Attorney General, the ACLU, ARC, Common Cause, People on the Go of Maryland, and the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council all testified against a similar bill and all claimed that requiring a drivers license or other photo ID would discriminate against the poor, the elderly, people of color or the disabled as they are not as likely to have such ID and obtaining such ID would be costly and time consuming.

They often claim “studies show”, but rarely footnote any actual study and when they do, they list studies ranging from 2008 to 2018 that are not Maryland specific. Supporting witnesses from last year and this year have provided more recent studies that counter these arguments, but for some reason they are not changing your opinions or even generating any questions about our data.

Current federal law requires that new registrants to vote MUST provide their Maryland Driver’s License number, MVA ID Card Number or the last 4 digits of their Social Security Number. I believe this requirement began in the 1990s. Thus, the number of voters who registered to vote prior to the law change has been dwindling, making the objections of these groups less compelling.

While this debate continues, perhaps the Assembly should correct the issue that these indentified groups do not have government-issued IDs. For example, the Assembly could create a program whereby the MVA sends out its mobile units to areas where large number of the poor, elderly, people of color and disabled live so that they can obtain licenses or MVA ID Cards to facilitate their voting registration.

This program would also lead to advantages in addition to voting. By obtaining government-issued identification, they would also have the ID they need to obtain numerous commercial and governmental services that increasingly require such ID. Also, by creating this program, the biggest objection to requiring identification to vote would no longer exist. As a result, voting laws requiring ID could be enacted without this alleged discrimination, thus increasing the public’s perception of increased integrity.

Please consider creating a program to give government-issued identification to the poor, the elderly, people of color and the disabled, so you no longer object to voting for a bill such as SB0772

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