



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SUPPORT TESTIMONY

HB 436 - Election Law - Voter Registration - Age and Notification to Minors

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkens, and Esteemed Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

House Bill 436 seeks to lower the voter registration **from** age 16 **to** 15 years and 9 months and requires that voter notification cards sent to minors include information about their future voting eligibility. This bill is not just a reform but a significant step towards strengthening our democracy and fostering a culture of civic engagement among our youth.

Aligning Voter Registration with a Logical Milestone

By aligning the voter registration age with the age at which many young people apply for their learner's permit, we are integrating the act of voter registration into a key rite of passage. This milestone is one where they learn about responsibilities and rights as members of our society. Just as driving requires understanding and respecting laws, voting requires comprehending civic duty and participation. This alignment ensures that the concept of voting is introduced at an age where they are already starting to engage more actively in their communities and societal responsibilities.

Easing the Transition to Voting Age

Lowering the voter registration age to fifteen years and nine months will ease the transition to voting age. This change provides young people ample time to understand and appreciate the importance of their vote before they become eligible to cast it. It also allows educators and civic organizations more time to engage with future voters, providing them with the necessary tools and information to make informed decisions when the time comes.

Increasing Voter Engagement Among Young People

One of the greatest challenges in our democracy is the engagement of younger voters. By introducing them to the voting process earlier, we are laying the groundwork for higher voter participation rates in this demographic. Research consistently shows that voting habits formed early in life tend to persist. Therefore, engaging citizens in the democratic process at a younger age can lead to a lifetime of civic involvement.

Ensuring Informed Participation Through Voter Notification Cards

A crucial aspect of this bill is the requirement that voter notification cards include information about future voting eligibility. These cards will serve as reminders and educational tools, informing young people about when and how they can vote, thus demystifying the process and making it more accessible. Informed voters are the cornerstone of a healthy democracy, and this provision ensures that our future voters are well-prepared.

In conclusion, House Bill 436 is not just about changing a number; it's about empowering future generations, strengthening democracy, and ensuring every voice is heard. By passing this bill, we are sending a clear message to our young people: their opinions matter, their participation is valued, and they are an integral part of our democratic fabric.

For these reasons, I urge your support for House Bill 436 and respectfully request a favorable report.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kris Fair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Delegate Kris Fair
District 3, Frederick County