

**March 5, 2024**

**Testimony on HB 1109  
Election Law – Registered Voter List and Petitions (Ballot Petition Modernization Act)  
Ways and Means**

**Position:** Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 1109 which will empower citizens by enhancing their ability to directly participate in the petition process as guaranteed under the Maryland Constitution. The petition process is an important part of Maryland’s democratic government; it gives citizens the chance to have their voice heard. It is a process that deserves greater accessibility but continues to be restrictive.

The process of petitioning largely involves direct contact with Maryland voters. The methods of reaching voters typically involve canvassing at high traffic locations like metro stops and farmers markets or going door-to-door. And while petitions can be posted online, they require proper formatting which typically comes in the form of a PDF, limiting overall usability for most voters.

This process creates unnecessary hurdles to an already limited tool. Many voters have limited availability to interact in-person with petitioners for reasons ranging from work schedules to access to public transportation. This proves even more difficult for the voters with disabilities and those who are confined to their place of residence.

HB 1109 seeks to address these barriers by building on the temporary regulations adopted by the State Board of Elections (SBE) during the 2020 elections that allowed for electronic petition signatures. This updated structure has proven to be both successful and secure, while creating greater access for all Marylanders and making signature verification seamless for election officials.

Citizens often feel like the power is out of their hands. HB 1109 is a step forward in reducing the barriers that usually hinder voters’ direct participation in the petition process. Public engagement in the democratic process should be encouraged, whether citizens are voting for elected officials or bringing issues to the ballot.

We urge a favorable report.