

SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
HB 317 – Election Law – Curbside Voting – Pilot Program
Hearing 3/27 at 1:00 p.m
Position: SUPPORT

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the designated Protection & Advocacy agency in Maryland, mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM advocates for Marylanders with disabilities to fully participate in the electoral process.

DRM supports House Bill 317, which creates an opportunity for individuals with certain disabilities and older adults to cast their ballots on Election Day without having to exit their vehicles. This bill would serve to provide an accommodation for voting for those who have difficulty walking or standing . The bill requires the State Board of Elections (SBE) to establish a curbside voting pilot program in three Maryland counties. The SBE will analyze data and community feedback from these counties to assess the feasibility of expanding curbside voting statewide in future elections. By increasing accessible voting methods, this bill broadens voting opportunities for voters with disabilities and mobility challenges.

Curbside voting is not a new concept; it has been successfully implemented in numerous states as a means to promote inclusivity in elections.¹ This pilot program will provide valuable data on how curbside voting can be effectively integrated into Maryland's electoral system. Mobility impairments are the most common disability among voters with disabilities. Providing additional accommodations to ensure these individuals can physically access a polling location is essential to preventing discrimination and ensuring full participation in our democracy. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) require that voting be accessible to all individuals, yet traditional voting methods still create obstacles. By implementing curbside voting, Maryland will be taking a significant step toward eliminating these barriers and upholding the fundamental right to vote.

In addition, we would like to note that curbside voting is not a substitute for any other voting method and must not be used to shift the responsibilities of

¹ https://www.lgbtmap.org/democracy-maps/curbside_voting

the State's obligations to ensure accessible and private voting. Physical polling places must remain fully accessible to all voters, and the State should continue to explore and expand accessibility across all voting methods to accommodate the needs of people with all disabilities. Ensuring that every Marylander can vote privately, independently, and securely must remain a priority in all election policies.

Ensuring equitable access to voting is a bipartisan issue that strengthens our democracy. DRM requests a favorable report on House Bill 317. Please do not hesitate to contact me at BradenS@DisabilityRightsMD.org or 410-929-6859 with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Braden Stinar, Esq.
Attorney
Disability Rights Maryland