



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB 66: Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With
Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

February 5, 2025

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. From this perspective, the Council supports SB 66 as a step toward making Maryland a place where everyone can participate effectively in the electoral process.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- SB 66 requires the State Board of Elections to establish guidelines for an expedited voting process for older voters and voters with disabilities (the voters) that is accessible.
- The process for accessible and expedited voting will include early voting and all polling places; collect feedback from the voters to make any adjustments as needed; and include instructions for election judge training on the best practices for assisting the voters.

WHY is this legislation important?

- **Voting is a fundamental right that Maryland's citizens with developmental disabilities want and need to access.** However, people with disabilities vote at a lower rate compared to people without disabilities.
- Voting rates are largely influenced by accessibility of voting, which remains a barrier for people with disabilities. In 2022, 20% of voters with disabilities experienced difficulty with voting compared to 6% among voters without disabilities.¹
- More people with disabilities vote in elections when there are expanded accessible voting options.¹ In the 2020 election, there was a six-point increase in voters with disabilities due to greater use of mail in voting and curbside voting due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While investments in voting equity are without question needed, including for people with disabilities, the Council believes that the amount, purpose, and timing of such efforts must take into consideration the needs of all Marylanders with disabilities. Funding for this bill should not be offset by limiting essential funding for other critical needs, most immediately the Developmental Disabilities Administration community services that thousands of Marylanders depend upon.

Contact: Dr. Stephanie Dolamore, Deputy Director, sdolamore@md-council.org

¹ https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/EAC_2023_Rutgers_Report_FINAL.pdf