

ARTHUR ELLIS, CPA  
*Legislative District 28*  
Charles County

DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

Finance Committee

*Senate Chair*

Joint Committee on the  
Management of Public Funds

Chair, Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert  
Counties' Senate Delegation



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

*Annapolis Office*  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 301  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3616 • 301-858-3616  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3616  
Arthur.Ellis@senate.state.md.us

*District Office*  
3261 Old Washington Road  
Waldorf, Maryland 20602

Sponsor Written Testimony: Favorable

Senate Bill 66: Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland

January 30, 2025

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kegan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I am honored to present Senate Bill 66, the Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland, which seeks to modernize and enhance Maryland's election process by ensuring a more inclusive, efficient, and accessible voting experience for all eligible voters. This bill is a proactive step toward eliminating barriers that disproportionately impact elderly voters, individuals with disabilities, and others who may have difficulty waiting in long lines at polling places. Voting is a fundamental right, and Maryland must take every necessary step to guarantee that all eligible citizens can exercise their right to vote without undue hardship.

Senate Bill 66 directs the State Board of Elections to establish clear, enforceable guidelines requiring local election boards to implement accessibility and expedited voting measures at every early voting center and Election Day polling place across the state. Specifically, the bill mandates the creation of designated priority lines for elderly voters and individuals with disabilities, ensuring that they do not have to endure unnecessarily long wait times. These priority areas will be marked with conspicuous signage, and polling places will be required to provide seating for those who need it while waiting to vote. These adjustments are straightforward yet impactful, helping to make the voting process smoother and more accommodating for vulnerable populations.

In addition to structural improvements at polling places, SB 66 also requires that election judges receive specialized training on best practices for assisting voters with disabilities and elderly voters. This training will include guidance on using accessible voting machines, effective communication strategies, and compliance with federal and state laws, such as the Americans

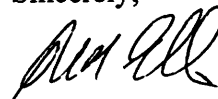
with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). Proper training is essential to ensuring that all poll workers understand their role in supporting voters who may need additional assistance.

Furthermore, this legislation calls for enhanced voter assistance measures. Many individuals with limited mobility, visual or hearing impairments, or cognitive disabilities often face challenges at the polls due to a lack of trained support staff or appropriate accommodations. SB 66 ensures that all polling places provide consistent and dignified assistance to voters in need, reducing confusion and frustration while promoting a fair and accessible election process. Additionally, the bill directs election officials to assess and address high-traffic polling locations, implementing strategies to reduce congestion and improve accessibility. This could include adding more voting machines, offering curbside voting options, or deploying specialized assistance teams to help facilitate a smooth voting experience.

The need for this bill is clear. Across Maryland, long wait times, inadequate accessibility measures, and inconsistent poll worker training continue to create obstacles for voters who already face challenges in their daily lives. While Maryland has made progress in improving election accessibility, there is still work to be done to ensure that no voter is disenfranchised due to physical limitations or unnecessary administrative barriers. SB 66 is not about changing voting eligibility rules or creating new bureaucratic hurdles; rather, it is about making sure that every Marylander has an equal opportunity to participate in our democracy.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 66 is a common-sense measure that will enhance Maryland's commitment to fair and accessible elections. By ensuring that elderly voters and individuals with disabilities receive the accommodations they need, we are upholding the integrity of our democratic process and reinforcing the principle that every vote matters. I respectfully urge this committee to issue a favorable report on SB 66 and support efforts to make voting in Maryland more accessible and efficient for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arthur Ellis', written in a cursive style.

Arthur Ellis