



## **SB 18 : Election Law - Early Voting - Number of Days**

### **Testimony of the Maryland Independent Living Network**

#### **SUPPORT**

Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee, February 5, 2025

The Maryland Independent Living Network is a coalition of the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council and the seven Maryland-based Centers for Independent Living (CIL). CILs are created by federal law. CILs work to enhance the civil rights and quality of services for people with disabilities. There are seven CILs located throughout Maryland, operated by and for people with disabilities. CILs provide Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training, and Transition Services to individuals with disabilities in their communities.

The Independent Living Network submits this written testimony in **support** of SB 18.

SB 18, if enacted, would increase the number of days that an early voting center remains open prior to an election. Specifically, the bill requires an early voting center to remain open up until the Monday before an election.

When the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed 31 years ago, it provided historic civil rights protections for disabled Americans and provided the four core outcomes of full participation, equal opportunity, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. Full participation should include disability inclusive democracy. Americans with disabilities still face barriers in fully participating in many aspects of their lives including participation in democratic elections.

Expanding opportunities to participate in the democratic process would permit more people with disabilities to participate in democratic elections by allowing them to exercise their right to vote.

Increasing the number of days that an early voting center is open increases access to voting. This is of particular importance to people with disabilities. People with disabilities would benefit from the bills provisions by having more time and opportunity to exercise the right to vote.

The Maryland Independent Living Network appreciates the consideration of these comments.

The Maryland Independent Living Network strongly **supports** SB 18 and urges a **favorable** report.

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