



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change

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SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

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**SB 66 – Election Law – Polling Place Procedures – Voting by Elderly
Voters and Voters with Disabilities**

(Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

Position: SUPPORT

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the Protection & Advocacy agency in Maryland, federally mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM works to increase opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities to be part of their communities through voting by advocating for equal access to the ballot box.

DRM strongly supports SB 66, which requires the State Board of Elections to establish guidelines for local boards of election in support of older adults and individuals with disabilities who seek to engage in the voting process. This bill will require local election boards to seek feedback from voters with disabilities to identify and address barriers to access. By mandating the State Board of Elections to establish clear guidelines, the bill ensures that local boards implement consistent processes to accommodate and expedite voting for these individuals at early voting centers and polling places. This ongoing commitment to accessibility will help improve the voting experience each election cycle, fostering greater participation and equity in the electoral process.

Over the past few election cycles, the number of voters with disabilities has continued to grow as access to the ballot box expands. In 2020, 62% of individuals with a disability turned out to vote. A significant increase when compared to 56% of voting age individuals with a disability who took part in

the electoral process in 2016.¹ With 40.2 million eligible voters with disabilities in 2024, making up nearly 1 in 6 voters, election policies must prioritize accessibility to ensure participation. Senate Bill 66 (2025) aligns with this goal by providing expedited voting options, priority seating, and improved election worker training, all of which could contribute to further increasing turnout.²

As more Americans with disabilities continue to engage in the electoral process, it is imperative to include specific requirements for election poll workers to follow in support of the unique needs these voters may present. Over the past election cycle, DRM received reports from community members relating to problematic interactions with poll workers around the state. DRM has worked with the State Board of Elections and share our concerns with them directly. Through this communication, it has become clear that election poll workers are open to receiving guidance on how to support voters with disabilities. Providing clear guidelines for election poll workers will equip them with the knowledge and confidence to effectively assist individuals with disabilities throughout the voting process. Additionally, requiring local boards to gather feedback from community members about their voting experiences will ensure that voters with disabilities have a meaningful voice in the electoral process. This ongoing input will help drive continuous improvements to voting methods, fostering greater accessibility and inclusion over time.

DRM is truly excited to see this legislation intended to support older adults and community members with disabilities. We are able, should the State Board of Elections need technical assistance, guidance or resources in providing support with the establishment of the proposed guidelines.

¹ <https://www.eac.gov/news/2021/07/07/new-data-177-million-americans-disabilities-voted-2020-significant-increase-over>.

² https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Centers/Program_Disability_Research/Disability_Electorate_Projections_Report_Oct2024.pdf.

Respectfully submitted,

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Disability Rights Maryland