

Klein - Postage paid voter registration Feb 24.pdf

Uploaded by: Aileen Klein

Position: FAV

February 24, 2025

Senate Bill SB323 Postage-Paid Voter Registration

Chair Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan, The Senate of Maryland Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Support for Senate Bill 323

To the Honorable Members of the Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Aileen Klein and I live in Rockville, Maryland. I am writing you today about an issue that I thought had been fixed several years ago. I have an acquaintance who is in this country legally, but not yet a citizen. Her children, however, are citizens born in the U.S. She asked me several months ago how old you have to be to register to vote. I told her 16, then she told me her daughter turned 16 recently and wanted to register.

Years ago, I used to canvas to register voters, so I thought I would hold a gathering of my friend's daughter and her friends and show each how to register to vote. My thought was that they, in turn, would hold more get togethers with their other friends and get all of them registered. I did not know if the process had changed since then, so I called the Montgomery County Board of Elections in Gaithersburg. Sure enough, they had a class to instruct people on how to register others. I attended the class, along with six other people, and discovered that the registration form had not really changed at all. Neither had the fact that you needed to put a stamp on it to have it mailed.

I remember canvassing homes in Pennsylvania several elections ago and at one of the houses, I spoke with a young man who was home from college for the weekend. He told me he had his form and wanted to mail it, but when he was in his dorm, he had no idea where to get a stamp. This really hit me hard, because we try to make it as easy as possible for people to vote. I brought this up at the time to my legislators and thought the problem had been solved by having the forms stamped postage paid. Now I find out that this is only true for voting, not registering to vote.

The intention, I am sure, is to make voting as easy and as accessible as possible to every eligible voter. Rectifying this one small issue would be a step towards making this a reality.

Thank you so much for all you are doing to make Maryland and our country even better than it is today.

Sincerely,

Aileen Klein

DRM Testimony - Support - SB 323 Prepaid Postage o

Uploaded by: Braden Stinar

Position: FAV



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change

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DisabilityRightsMD.org

SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

February 26, 2025

**SB 323 – Election Law – Statewide Voter Registration Application –
Prepaid Postage**

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.

DRM supports Senate Bill 323, which requires statewide voter registration applications to include a return envelope with prepaid postage, facilitating the return of the application to the State Board of Elections. Individuals with disabilities often encounter barriers that impede their ability to engage fully in the voting process. By providing additional support for individuals registering to vote, this bill will facilitate the participation of individuals with disabilities to exercise their fundamental voting rights.

The inclusion of prepaid postage eliminates a potential financial barrier and simplifies the registration process, particularly benefiting those who may find it challenging to obtain postage due to mobility constraints or other disability-related limitations. This measure aligns with the principles of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which mandates equal access to public services and accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

SB 323 also promotes greater civic engagement by making voter registration more straightforward and less burdensome. This is especially crucial for individuals with disabilities, who are often underrepresented in the electoral process. For these reasons, we request a favorable report on SB 323. Please do not hesitate to contact me BradenS@DisabilityRightsMD.org or 443-692-2485.

Respectfully submitted,

Braden Stinar, Esq.
Attorney
Disability Rights Maryland

SB 323 - Election Law – Statewide Voter Registrati

Uploaded by: Morgan Drayton

Position: FAV

February 26, 2025

Testimony on SB 323
Election Law – Statewide Voter Registration Application – Prepaid Postage
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of SB 323, which would require the State Board of Election to include a pre-addressed return envelope, including prepaid postage, with any statewide voter registration application.

Maryland already provides return postage for voters who utilize absentee or mail-in ballots and wish to return those ballots through the postal system. This legislation would simply extend that practice to voter registration applications, which an eligible individual can download and print from the State Board of Election website.

During this past election cycle, we saw many voters taking advantage of same-day registration. We fought hard to make this possible, and while we're glad that people are taking advantage of the opportunity to make their voice heard, same-day registration should always only be used as a last resort. We should be proactive and working to ensure interested eligible potential voters are registered far in advance of the election. This will alleviate some of the pressure from the same-day registration judges.

Making available a foldable envelope similar to what's included with electronic ballot delivery will help increase a voter's willingness to return the completed registration packet. We know that the average person who receives and completes a voter registration packet won't remember to take the last step to return it to the local board. This is why when volunteers are trained to do field voter registration, the training instructs the volunteer to take the completed form from the eligible voter and return it to the local board for them.

Providing some ability for the voter to access a pre-paid envelope – ideally making sure it's available in the voter registration packet that's available online, as well as available to pick up at the local board – would be a step towards making voter registration more accessible overall.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report.

SB323.DDCouncil.Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel London

Position: FAV



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB 323: Election Law - Statewide Voter Registration Application - Prepaid Postage
February 26, 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 323 as a step toward making Maryland a place where everyone can participate effectively in the electoral process.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- SB 323 requires the state wide voter application to include:
 - either a return envelope or a template for how to fill out an envelope to return the application; and
 - prepaid postage with instructions on how to use it

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 participate in the electoral process at a lower rate compared to people without disabilities due to accessibility barriers.
- One way to support participation is by improving barriers to registration, such as with postage and envelopes. The U.S. Election Commission found a 3% difference in the registration rate of people with disabilities compared to people without disabilities.
- More accessible voter registration benefits all Marylanders: busy moms, older adults, college students, low-income families, and more. Around 25% of eligible voters are not registered, making registration the biggest barrier to voting in Maryland. Everyone deserves to have a smooth registration process so they can exercise their right to vote.

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

Testimony - Postage-Paid Registration SB323.pdf

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

CHERYL C. KAGAN
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Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SB323: Postage-Paid Registration

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Wednesday, February 26, 2025 1:00 PM

In 2020, the General Assembly enacted [HB37](#), which mandated that mail-in ballots come with prepaid postage, reducing any economic barrier for voters.

Marylanders can register to vote online, at the MVA, at community registration booths, or in-person during Early Voting or on Election Day. However, individuals who register by mail using the [statewide form](#) are required to cover the cost of postage themselves, which was flagged for me by a Rockville constituent. According to the State Board of Elections (SBE), between January 1 and August 31, 2024, there were just 3,006 people who chose this method .

[SB323](#) would allow for mail-in voter registration forms to have pre-paid postage, effective June 1, 2025. The mailing address and indicia on the applications will belong to the SBE, which will forward the registration data to the appropriate county.

Closing this tiny gap will make registering to vote more accessible. This body has a long record of removing financial barriers to voting, and this extends that ethos to voter registration.

I urge a favorable report on SB323.

2025 SB0323 Testimony Against 2025-02-26.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: UNF

Testimony Against SB0323

Honorable Senators

Please enter an unfavorable report against SB0323.

I am against:

- Requiring that a statewide voter registration application include a return envelope or envelope template with prepaid postage that an applicant may use to return the application to the State Board of Elections;
- requiring a statewide voter registration application to be accompanied by certain instructions for postage; and
- requiring the return envelopes or envelope templates to be preprinted with the address of the State Board for purposes of the returning the statewide voter registration application.

This bill wants to change the process so that all new registration requests will be sent only to the State Board of Elections (SBE). However the current process per the State Voter Registration website states

Forms can be **MAILED** to the State Board of Elections ([see address](#)) **OR** to your [county's Board of Elections](#).

https://elections.maryland.gov/voter_registration/application.html

The current process already has an envelope designed to be sent to one's local Board of Elections (LBE). The envelope has the following pre-printed on the envelope ("County Board of Elections"). However, it does not have prepaid postage and the location of the LBE is not preprinted (So the form can be sent to any of the 24 local LBEs).

To get the downloadable form and a list of the addresses for all 24 LBEs, use the url below
https://elections.maryland.gov/voter_registration/documents/English_Internet_VRA.pdf

If one does not want to download the blank form, one can use the online process to fill in the form via online keying. If it is a new registration, then one would print it, sign it, and then mail it to one's LBE. If one is already registered, but needs to make a change such as an address or party affiliation, one can use the online process and avoid mailing the form.

To fill out the form online, use the next 2 urls

<https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/OnlineVoterRegistration/InstructionsStep1>
<https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/OnlineVoterRegistration/InstructionsStep2>

Those without online access can go to their LBE and acquire a form, take it home, prepare it, sign it and then mail it in or prepare it there, sign it and submit it to the LBE staff.

At the time I prepared my testimony, there was not a fiscal analysis available. I would imagine there would be programming costs to change the current website, and the online process plus redo the existing envelope to add the complete address of the SBE and to add the prepaid postage.

Testimony Against SB0323

My bigger concern is that all the new registrations and the registration changes not done online will now be required to be sent to the SBE instead of the LBE address of the registrant. The SBE does not have the staffing to process these requests, which should have been sent to the LBE.

How much will it cost the SBE to forward these registration requests to the LBE?

Has an analysis been done to estimate how many people have not registered to vote because they could not afford a stamp or could not address an envelope? Are there enough potential users to warrant the cost of this new process when the State is facing a \$3 billion dollar deficit?

Please vote against HB0323.

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February 26, 2025