



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Ways and Means Committee

HB 781: Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

February 18, 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 participate in the electoral process at a lower rate compared to people without disabilities due to accessibility barriers.
- Many polling places remain inaccessible for voters with disabilities. The U.S. Election Commission found that 20% of voters with disabilities had trouble on election day due to accessibility at polling locations compared to 6% among voters without disabilities.
- More accessible polling locations benefits all Marylanders. When one group is served more efficiently, all voters are able to vote more efficiently. This means voters who are busy moms, college students, low-income families, and more can all expect a better experience at the polls. Everyone deserves to a smooth voting process so they can exercise their right to vote during every election cycle.

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.

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