

January 21, 2025

**Testimony on HB 153
Election Law – Voter Registration – Age and Notification to Minors
Ways & Means**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of HB 153, which lowers the minimum age of voter pre-registration from 16 years from 15 years and 9 months.

Young people already submit supporting documents to the MVA when they are first eligible to begin the driver's licensing process. This legislation would simply allow them to pre-register to vote at that time, lowering the current minimum age for pre-registration from 16 to 15 and $\frac{3}{4}$. Those who pre-register to vote will still automatically become eligible voters for elections that occur once they are at least 18-years-old.

This is a small change that would offer young people another early opportunity to begin engaging with our elections system. Scholarship has shown that pre-registration increases turnout and engagement for young voters, who have historically the least likely group to exercise their right to vote.^{1 2}

Preregistration ensures that young people are added to the voter file as soon as possible, making it more likely that they will be engaged directly by candidates and campaigns during the election cycle and hopefully piquing a lifelong interest in participating in our democracy.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.