



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Ways and Means Committee
HB 317: Election Law - Curbside Voting - Pilot Program
February 4, 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 HB 317 as a step toward making Maryland a place where everyone can participate effectively in the electoral process.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- HB 317 requires a pilot program for curbside voting that is accessible for people with disabilities in three jurisdictions: one county with a small number of votes, one with a medium number of voters, and one with a large number of votes.
- It also requires specific policies and procedures for accessible curbside voting that provide options for people with disabilities to vote independently or with assistance as needed.

WHY is this legislation important?

- **Voting is a fundamental right that Maryland's citizens with developmental disabilities want and need to access.**
- The lack of accessible polling locations in Maryland remains a barrier for people with disabilities. For example, in the 2022 elections, voters with disabilities were more likely to report difficulties waiting in line and getting inside the polling place than those without disabilities.¹
- According to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, more people with disabilities vote during elections when there are expanded accessible voting options. For example, in the 2020 election, there was a six-point increase in the number of people with disabilities who voted due to greater use of mail in voting and curbside voting due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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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¹ https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/EAC_2023_Rutgers_Report_FINAL.pdf