



**TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**HB 317 Election Law – Curbside Voting - Pilot Program**

**Position: Information Only**

**From: Linda Kohn, President**

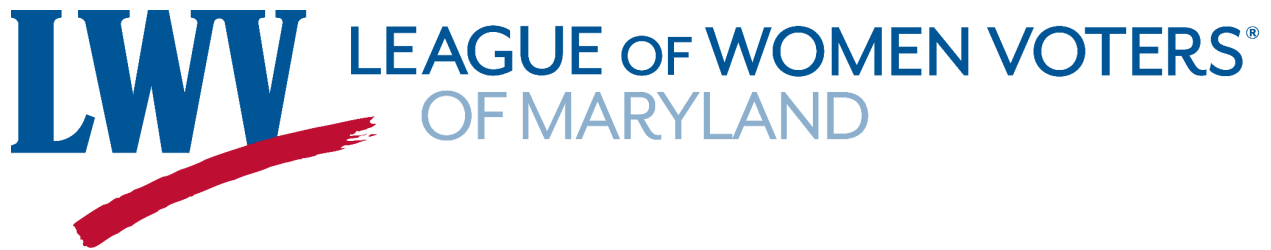
**Date: February 4, 2025**

The League of Women Voters believes that election systems should increase voter participation and be equitable and accessible. HB 317 would set up a pilot program that makes curbside voting available in three jurisdictions of different sizes. Voters would request curbside voting at the voting location and could request a paper ballot or use of a ballot marking device (BMD).

While we support the continuing development of options for voters to cast their ballot and believe that the intention of this bill is to cast a wider net for those who may feel left out of the process or to give an easier method of voting for those who are simply unable to vote another way, the League believes that there needs to be adjustments to make this a trusted, viable method.

First, privacy is a significant concern to us. We do not want the voter to be in a situation where they are either forced, intentionally or not, to let a secondary person in their vehicle see their BMD screen or their paper ballot. This could happen through being too insecure to tell the person to remove themselves or feeling like they aren't allowed to ask. The League believes in enacting what other states do, which is to instruct the election judge to ask the secondary person to leave the vehicle. This would give the voter an opportunity to consent to having their privacy minimized.

Second, with growing unrest around the country, and here in Maryland, of false allegations of fraudulent elections, we are concerned that not giving a detailed approach as to how the ballots, once cast, will be handled will invite too much undue scrutiny to the elections. The League suggests that a locked dropbox, similar to that of a ballot drop box, is placed at or within sight of the voter and would be included in any polling place checks. In addition to this, it would also be beneficial if an election judge explained the way security is handled to voters as part of this pilot program.



Third, the League is concerned about the language that suggests that a BMD and poll book will be brought out to the location for every voter. If weather-proof equipment is available, it would be beneficial not only to the voter but also to the election judge to have equipment that can stay outside only to be brought in at the end of the voting period each day. We would also encourage election judges to be paid a “hardship” stipend for being outside due to unpredictable or even inclement weather. The League hopes that if the pilot program is successful, funds will be available to create permanent structures for curbside voting like in other states.

Lastly, because the League supports the initiative behind the bill, it is thought that one curbside voting location is not enough for the large district. One location might work in smaller counties with less than 50,000 voters. However, in larger counties like Montgomery or Prince George’s, having only one location could result in longer lines and longer wait times. The League urges that the larger jurisdiction institutes two curbside voting locations. This would give SBE better data on how effective the program actually is, as well as giving good governance groups data on how it impacts voters.

The League supports the intention behind offering curbside voting and would like to see as many people, especially those who have not participated in voting before, engage in the process. We believe that curbside voting could be a viable option if the above concerns are taken into consideration.