

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

January 28, 2025

HB 91 – Elections – In-Person Voting – Proof of Identity

Position: OPPOSE

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 through voting by advocating for equal and equitable access to the ballot box.

DRM opposes HB 91, which would require all voters to provide a photo ID to cast their vote. The proposed voter identification requirement would create barriers to voting access that would disproportionately affect those with disabilities.

House Bill 91 would require individuals to present a form of photo identification to exercise their fundamental constitutional right to vote. Research consistently shows that this requirement would create a disproportionately high barrier for disabled voters, who are 36% less likely to possess a valid government-issued ID.¹

Further research indicates that voter identification requirements impose an unjust burden on low-income individuals, communities that are predominantly Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, Hispanic voters, and older adults.² The Brennan Center for Justice also found that 10 million otherwise eligible voters live more than 10 miles from the nearest office that

¹ <https://www.voteriders.org/impact-of-voter-id-laws-on-people-with-disabilities/>

² <https://www.projectvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/AMERICANS-WITH-PHOTO-ID-Research-Memo-February-2015.pdf>

can issue a qualifying form of identification.³ This requirement would burden voters with disabilities, many of whom have trouble with mobility and unique difficulties in accessing transportation that meets their specific needs.

Further, between the necessary travel time and additional fees, obtaining a government issued photo ID can be costly. The ACLU reports that this cost could be between \$75-\$175 per person.⁴ Considering that Marylanders with disabilities routinely encounter barriers with transportation and employment that disproportionately effect wages and financial stability, requiring an additional expense to take part in the electoral process will inevitably serve as a barrier to participation for Marylanders with disabilities.

Identification mandates for voters, such as those proposed in House Bill 91, place an undue burden on voters with disabilities while attempting to address a problem that is, exceedingly rare. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, the rate of in-person voter impersonation nationally is just 0.00004% of all ballots cast.⁵ Notably, this rate is significantly lower than other forms of voter fraud, which House Bill 91 fails to address.

The rate of in-person voter impersonation is also significantly lower than the percentage of voters who do not have government-issued IDs (4.8%), the number of voters with disabilities who do not have government-issued IDs (7.5%), the number of voter who were blocked from voting due to having the wrong form of ID in states with ID mandates (6%), and the number of voters who were deterred from voting past elections due to confusion about ID mandates (11.2%).⁶

When the number of voters who will lose access to the ballot or face significant barriers to voting far exceeds the number of cases this bill aims to

³ <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/challenge-obtaining-voter-identification>

⁴ <https://www.aclu.org/documents/oppose-voter-id-legislation-fact-sheet>

⁵ <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/debunking-voter-fraud-myth>

⁶ <https://www.voteriders.org/impact-of-voter-id-laws-on-people-with-disabilities/>

address, it becomes evident that such measures are designed to restrict rather than enhance democratic participation in our state.

Every individual is entitled to their constitutional right to participate in their government through the ballot box. For this reason, we urge you to oppose House Bill 91.

Respectfully submitted,

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