



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Ways and Means Committee

HB 781: Workgroup on Mail-In Ballot Accessibility

February 24, 2025

Position: Support with Amendments

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.

The Council supports HB 781 with the following amendments to ensure the Council can participate as envisioned by the bill sponsors:

- **ADD “(6) ONE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL” under (b)(5)**
- **REMOVE “ONE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL” from (b)(6)(v)**

WHAT does this legislation do?

- This bill establishes a workgroup to **look at the accessibility of the State’s** mail-in ballot return system including the impact on voters with disabilities.
- The workgroup will collect information about current practices for accessible alternatives to paper mail-in ballot return, and evaluate the alternatives for people with disabilities.

WHY is this legislation important?

- Voting is a fundamental right that Marylanders 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.
- Voting remains inaccessible for many people with disabilities. The U.S. Election Commission found that 20% of voters with disabilities had trouble on Election Day due to accessibility compared to 6% among voters without disabilities.
- More accessible voting systems 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 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.

Contact: Dr. Stephanie Dolamore, Deputy Director, sdolamore@md-council.org