



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 733 Election Law – Elections for County Boards of Education – Party Designation or Affiliation –Certificates of Candidacy and Ballots

POSITION – OPPOSE

BY: Linda T. Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active citizen participation and that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed by law without undue burden or intimidation. The League also supports public access to voting and voter registration.

HB 0733 permits a candidate for election to a county board of education to disclose their party designation or party affiliation on their certificate of candidacy, prohibiting a local board of elections from disqualifying a candidate for election to a county board for disclosing their party designation or party affiliation, **requiring each local board to include the candidate's party designation or party affiliation on a ballot.**

LWVMD believes the language of HB 0733 is disingenuous and inconsistent. HB 0733 retains Section 8–802. (a) (1) (i) *which states of boards of education shall be elected on a nonpartisan basis; and then provides for candidates to declare their party designation or party affiliation*, as if voters, with knowledge of a candidate's party designation or affiliation, can pretend not to know what they know when they vote. Conducting nonpartisan elections allows voters to research those candidates and vote for the one that aligns with their values. By including party affiliation, we are taking away from this democratic process.

The League acknowledges many county party central committees and candidates do not follow the spirit of current law requiring county board of education to be nonpartisan, perhaps because there is no enforcement mechanism. However, instead of leaning into letting parties influence voters, there should be more substantial parameters around how parties engage with nonpartisan elections.

The LWVMD, representing concerned citizens throughout Maryland, strongly urges an unfavorable report on HB 0733.