



House Ways and Means

HB 1097: Workgroup on Mail-In Ballot Accessibility

February 24, 2025

Position: Support

The Arc Maryland is a statewide advocacy organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We work to protect and advance the rights of people with disabilities and to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. As such, we support HB 1097 because we believe it will increase access to the fundamental right to vote for people with disabilities.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- HB1097 creates a workgroup to examine Mail-In Ballot accessibility. The workgroup is tasked with examining the current processes and procedures in the State relating to mail-in ballot return; assessing the impact on voters with disabilities of requiring mail-in ballots to be returned in paper form; collecting information about current practices and standards for accessible alternatives to paper mail-in ballot return in other jurisdictions; and evaluating alternatives to paper mail-in ballot return for individuals with disabilities, including each of the following considerations:

- (i) accessibility;
- (ii) security, including options for mitigating security concerns;
- (iii) the potential for discrimination against voters with disabilities;
- (iv) the ability of voters with disabilities to vote privately and independently; and
- (v) the cost and feasibility of implementation

The workgroup is required to submit a report to the Governor and General Assembly before December 31, 2025

WHY is this legislation important?

- Voting is a fundamental right that Maryland's citizens with developmental disabilities want and need.
- The lack of consideration to having a Mail-In Ballot that is truly private is a going concern, particularly for people with visual impairments who rely on a supporter to show them where they must sign their names.
- Pressures to require signatures on mail-in ballots are repeated and would create a barrier for people with disabilities that must be identified and respected.
- 1 in 6 voters has a disability. That voting bloc is growing as the population ages.¹

This legislation provides critical services and accommodations to ensure people with developmental disabilities and older adults have the access and opportunity to exercise their fundamental right to vote. The Arc Maryland would be proud to provide a representative to serve on this important Task Force.

The Arc Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 1097.

For additional information, please contact:

Ande Kolp, Executive Director

akolp@thearcmd.org

¹ <https://www.npr.org/2024/10/31/nx-s1-5161357/1-in-6-voters-has-a-disability-that-voting-bloc-is-growing-as-the-population-ages>