



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of HB0680**  
Municipal Elections - Voter Registration - List and Qualifications

House Ways and Means Committee

February 11, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Committee,

CASA strongly opposes House Bill 680- Municipal Elections - Voter Registration - List and Qualifications. CASA is a national powerhouse organization building power and improving the quality of life in working-class: Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities.

House Bill 680 would require that every municipality in Maryland require voter registration for participation in its elections and prohibit individuals who are not U.S. citizens from registering to vote in municipal elections. We ask the committee to consider the following and how HB 680 would negatively impact non-citizen residents and municipal elections:

- **Non-Citizen Voting Strengthens Our Democracy.** Non-citizen voting in municipal elections has been a longstanding practice in several Maryland jurisdictions, promoting inclusivity and civic engagement. Communities like Takoma Park (since 1992), Martin's Additions (since 1976), and Hyattsville (since 2017), others include Mount Rainier, Colmar Manor, Cheverly, Edmonston, Riverdale, Greenbelt, New Carrollton have allowed non-citizen residents to participate in local elections, recognizing that these residents contribute to the vitality and well-being of their communities. The results have been overwhelmingly positive, fostering stronger neighborhood ties and encouraging greater participation in local governance.
- **Immigrants Are Integral to Our Communities.** Immigrants are not passive bystanders in our communities—they are active contributors to our social, cultural, and economic fabric. Maryland is home to over 842,000 immigrants, accounting for 1 in 7 residents. In Prince George's County alone, nearly 20% of the population is foreign-born. Immigrants, regardless of their legal status, contribute significantly to our economy, comprising 18.2% of the state's workforce. In 2012, unauthorized immigrants paid nearly \$294 million in state and local taxes. Despite their substantial contributions, many immigrants

remain disenfranchised due to the complexities and barriers of the U.S. immigration system. Providing non-citizen residents with the right to vote in municipal elections is a recognition of their investment in our communities and an essential step toward inclusive governance.

- **Local Issues Affect All Residents—Let All Residents Have a Say.** Municipal governments oversee critical services like public safety, infrastructure maintenance, and community development—services that impact all residents, regardless of immigration status. Excluding non-citizen residents from voting in local elections undermines the principles of representative democracy and alienates a significant portion of our communities. When all residents have a voice in local decision-making, it leads to stronger, more engaged communities.
- **The Administrative Burden of Enforcing Citizenship Requirements.** Requiring proof of U.S. citizenship for municipal elections imposes an unnecessary administrative burden on local governments. Verifying legal status is complex, costly, and prone to errors. Many immigrants with legal status may not possess the documentation needed to prove it, such as:
  - Non-immigrant visa holders awaiting reinstatement of their status
  - Victims of trafficking who have yet to file for T non-immigrant status
  - Lawful permanent residents whose green cards have expired but retain their status
- **Non-Citizen Voting Is a Celebration of Democratic Values.** Allowing non-citizen residents to vote in municipal elections sends a powerful message that Maryland values diversity, inclusion, and democratic participation. It reflects our state's commitment to embracing all members of our communities, regardless of their immigration status. Enacting House Bill 680 would reverse decades of progress in jurisdictions that have chosen to expand the franchise, stifling civic engagement and alienating immigrant residents.

Rather than prohibiting non-citizen voting and creating an exclusionary and bureaucratic voting process, municipalities should continue to focus on residency-based voting eligibility, which is simpler, more inclusive, and reflective of the reality that local policies affect all residents.

House Bill 680 represents a step backward for Maryland's democracy. It disregards the positive outcomes of non-citizen voting in numerous Maryland municipalities, imposes unnecessary administrative burdens, and undermines the principles of inclusivity and civic engagement.

**CASA strongly urges an unfavorable report.**