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**Statement of the Maryland Federation of  
National Active and Retired Federal Employees  
House Ways & Means Committee Hearing, February 18, 2025  
On HB 781 - Election Law – Polling Place Procedures –  
Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters with Disabilities  
(Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)**

**(Position – FAV)**

To: Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Committee Members

I am pleased to provide you with this statement on behalf of the State Legislative Committee of the Maryland National and Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), representing approximately 317,000 federal annuitants and employees in Maryland. For the continuing benefit of all Maryland seniors and disabled persons – our members and all others -- we support and ask you for a favorable report on HB 781, Election Law – Polling Place Procedures – Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters with Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited

Voting Act of Maryland). We thank Delegate Denise Roberts and her co-sponsors for introducing this Bill.

Clearly, the right to vote, a foundation of our Democracy, is more important than ever. HB 781 will provide substantial strides in that regard, by requiring the State Board of Elections (SBE) to issue guidelines for local boards to accommodate and expedite voting for older people and people with disabilities through dedicated lines, signs and priority seating, and to establish election judge training for these new guidelines.

We have no doubt that election judges and election workers at Maryland polling places have done their best to help voters who need special assistance because they are elderly or disabled. But there are still instances where someone will fall through the cracks. I saw this at an early voting polling place in Anne Arundel county last year when several older voters faced long lines without getting any opportunity to sit down to wait for the line to catch up to them, and were very discouraged, some to the point of leaving to come another day.

Sen. Arthur Ellis from Charles County, the sponsor of SB 66, the companion Bill to HB 781, noted at the February 5, 2025 Education, Energy and the

Environment Committee Hearing for SB 66 that some older and disabled voters who showed up to the polls last year asked for accommodations but were told they had to wait in line with other voters. Senator Ellis declared that it's "unacceptable" to have so many voters disenfranchised. He noted "They should have a choice to vote the way they want to vote, and not to be insulted by election workers or anybody else telling them ... 'Please go away, you're not needed here.'

In thinking about and researching HB 781, I noted some unsuccessful bills in past years which would have required the SBE only to specify in election judge training materials the methods an election judge may use to assist or accommodate elderly and disabled voters in voting at a polling site, and to require SBE to develop and post signage at polling places identifying these methods to voters. These seemed like helpful and modest goals, so I am not sure why these Bills did not pass.

I think HB 781 is a better path to help seniors and disabled persons make voting easier than the earlier unsuccessful bills. It will require the SBE to establish guidelines for the local boards of election to implement special procedures for elderly voters and voters with disabilities at each early voting center and polling place and requires the local boards to implement the guidelines. As important

follow-up, the SBE will submit a report to the General Assembly after each election discussing any challenges to its guidelines, and a summary of feedback received by local boards on the effectiveness of the new guidelines.

When the SBE begins the work to establish these guidelines, we at MD NARFE expect and look forward to participate in whatever public rulemaking process the SBE should implement to achieve the requirements of HB 781.

We respectfully ask that you give a favorable report to HB 781.

Thank you.

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