



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change

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HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

February 24, 2025

HB 1097 – Workgroup on Mail-In Ballot Accessibility

Position: SUPPORT

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the Protection & Advocacy agency in Maryland, federally mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM submits this testimony in support of House Bill 1097.

House Bill 1097 would create a workgroup tasked with examining the current process and procedures of the State’s mail-in ballot return system. The workgroup will collect information regarding current best practice standards for ensuring accessibility, evaluate alternatives to the paper mail-in ballot return process for individuals with disabilities, and assess the impact of the current requirements surrounding the paper return of mail-in ballots by voters with disabilities. Through the process of evaluating alternatives to the current paper mail-in ballot return system, the work group will consider the accessibility, security, cost, and privacy implications that may emerge. The workgroup would report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2025.

DRM supports this bill because it aims to remove barriers that can hinder people with disabilities from voting independently and securely. Mail-in paper ballots can create obstacles that make participation in the electoral process more difficult. This bill seeks to improve the voting system by incorporating expert input on alternative ballot return methods. The workgroup will be comprised of experts in voting rights and election security field, members of the state legislature, and key stakeholders from various state departments. The collaboration of this group of subject matter experts will ensure Maryland remains at the forefront of removing barriers to the ballot box for

state residents. Ultimately, this bill strengthens the fundamental right to vote for all Marylanders, regardless of ability.

For these reasons we request a favorable report. Please do not hesitate to contact me by email BradenS@DisabilityRightsMD.org or by phone at 443-692-2485.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attorney
Disability Rights Maryland