



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

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House Ways and Means Committee

HB624: Election Law - Statewide Voter Registration Application - Prepaid Postage

February 11, 2025

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. From this perspective, the Council supports HB 624 as a step toward making Maryland a place where everyone can participate effectively in the electoral process.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- HB 624 requires the state wide voter application to include:
 - either a return envelope or a template for how to fill out an envelope to return the application; and
 - prepaid postage with instructions on how to use it

WHY is this legislation important?

- **Voting is a fundamental right that Maryland's citizens with developmental disabilities** want and need to access. However, people with disabilities participate in the electoral process at a lower rate compared to people without disabilities due to accessibility barriers.
- One way to support participation is by improving barriers to registration, such as with postage and envelopes. The U.S. Election Commission found a 3% difference in the registration rate of people with disabilities compared to people without disabilities.
- More accessible voter registration benefits all Marylanders: busy moms, older adults, college students, low-income families, and more. Around 25% of eligible voters are not registered, making registration the biggest barrier to voting in Maryland. Everyone deserves to have a smooth registration process so they can exercise their right to vote.

While investments in voting equity are without question needed, including for people with disabilities, the Council believes that the amount, purpose, and timing of such efforts must take into consideration the needs of all Marylanders with disabilities. Funding for this bill should not be offset by limiting essential funding for other critical needs, most immediately the Developmental Disabilities Administration community services that thousands of Marylanders depend upon.

Contact: Dr. Stephanie Dolamore, Deputy Director, sdolamore@md-council.org