

Unfavorable HB91: Elections – In-Person voting – Proof of identity

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From: National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

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To: Ways and Means Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Ways and Means Committee to vote unfavorable on HB91. HB91 will require in person voters to prove their identity by supplying a valid ID and a bank statement or a bill or a check which has the voter's address on it. These requirements are a burden for persons with disabilities, particularly those with print disabilities including blindness. A person who is blind or low vision is unlikely to receive bank statements, write paper checks, or issue or receive other paper-based documents due to the inherent obstacles with having a print disability.

In addition, individuals with disabilities are disproportionately negatively impacted by voter ID requirements in that it is significantly more burdensome for an individual with a disability to obtain certain forms of photo identification. As many voters with disabilities cannot drive, blind and low vision voters in particular cannot drive, we are dependent on public transportation to get to Motor Vehicle Departments. This may be costly, time consuming, and sometimes prohibitive. Those of us in rural areas within the State have even more difficulty obtaining state-issued photo identification by virtue of little or no public transportation options to get us to issuing facilities. Thus, this proposed legislation would impose an additional barrier to voting on individuals with disabilities.

The National Federation of the Blind, at its 2021 National Convention, adopted a resolution urging all states to refrain from requiring voter identification for voters with disabilities, and as a state affiliate, we urge the Maryland General Assembly to follow this resolution. It is attached.

There is no evidence to prove that people who vote in person are falsifying their identity. Voting is a right that all citizens have. The Maryland General Assembly should not create barriers for those who vote in person, particularly those who are blind, low vision, or have other disabilities.

We emphatically urge the House Ways and Means Committee to vote no on this bill.

For questions or more information, please feel free to contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.