

Unfavorable HB115: Election Law - Polling Places - Establishing Voter Identity (Voter Privacy Act of 2025)

Date: January 28, 2025

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 HB 115.

In a Democracy, voting is a right that every citizen possesses. The Maryland General Assembly should not create barriers to voter participation.

What criteria does an election judge use to decide who he/she will ask to produce proof of identity? If a voter merely forgets to bring a valid photo ID, is he/she penalized for this offense?

In the 2020 election, approximately 1/3 of eligible voters did not vote. The government should be working to make sure that a higher percentage of eligible voters vote in all elections. Demanding that voters bring proof of identity does not accomplish this goal.

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.

We emphatically urge The House Ways and Means Committee to vote "no" on HB 115.

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