

SB73.TheArcMaryland.Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Ande Kolp

Position: FAV



Senate Education, Energy and the Environment

SB0073: Election Law – Polling Place Procedures – Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)
February 11, 2026

Position: Support

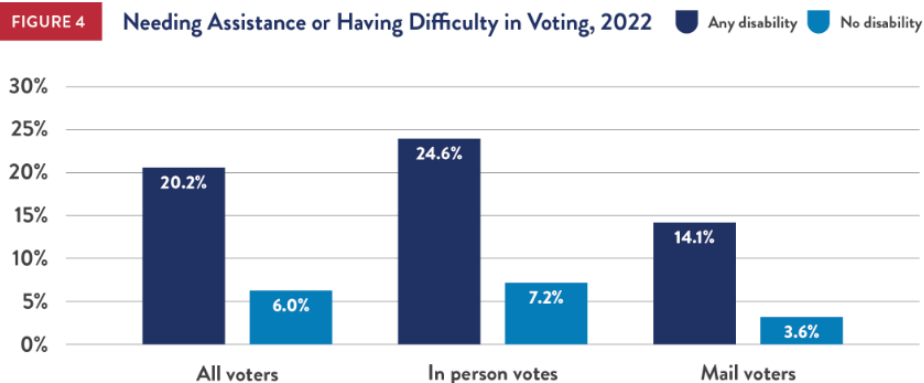
The Arc Maryland is a statewide advocacy organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We work to protect and advance the rights of people with disabilities and to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need.

SB73 requires the State Board of Elections to establish guidelines for an expedited voting process for older voters and voters with disabilities that is accessible. The process for accessible and expedited voting will include early voting and all polling places; collecting feedback from the voters to make any adjustments as needed; and including instructions for election judge training on the best practices for assisting the voters.

This bill is important to enhance access to voters with disabilities. Many people with disabilities are registered voters, however, people with disabilities vote at a lower rate compared to people without disabilities.

A 2022 Rutgers report found that 20.2% of voters with disabilities reported they experienced difficulty with voting compared to 6% of voters without disabilities.¹

FIGURE 4 Needing Assistance or Having Difficulty in Voting, 2022



More people with disabilities vote in elections when there are expanded accessible voting options.

We support this legislation because it helps reduce barriers for people with disabilities and older adults so they may have equity in the exercise of their right to vote.

For additional information, please contact: Ande Kolp, Executive Director
akolp@thearcmd.org

ⁱ https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/EAC_2023_Rutgers_Report_FINAL.pdf

Sen Ellis Written Testimony - SB73.pdf

Uploaded by: Arthur Ellis

Position: FAV

ARTHUR ELLIS, CPA
Legislative District 28
Charles County

DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

Finance Committee

Vice Chair, Rules Committee

Senate Chair

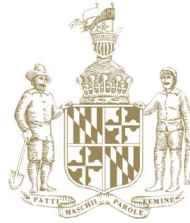
Joint Committee on the
Management of Public Funds

Senate Chair

Joint Committee on
Workers' Compensation Benefit and
Insurance Oversight

Senate Chair, Charles County Delegation

Chair, Select Committee Southern
Maryland



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Sponsor Written Testimony: Favorable
Senate Bill 0073: Election Law – Polling Place Procedures – Voting by Elderly Voters and
Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

February 9, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 73, which would establish guidelines for the local boards of election to implement a process to accommodate and expedite voting for elderly voters with disabilities at each early voting center and polling place.

There are barriers for elderly voters and voters with disabilities for those participating in person at voting locations such as long lines and lack of seating. These constituents are discouraged from voting in person because of these barriers in Maryland (Benenati, 2025). This bill would overcome these barriers by implementing regulations such as dedicated expedited lines, clearly marked signage indicating the availability of expedited services, priority seating in waiting areas, and specific provisions for high-traffic early voting centers and polling places.

The local boards have the responsibility of guaranteeing that these guidelines are implemented, collecting feedback from elderly voters and voters with disabilities, and making immediate adjustments to the process as necessary. I ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 73.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Arthur Ellis".

Arthur Ellis, CPA

DRM Written Testimony FAV SB 73 Accessible and Exp

Uploaded by: Braden Stinar

Position: FAV



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change

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DisabilityRightsMD.org

**SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
SB 73: Election Law – Polling Place Procedures – Voting by Elderly
Voters and Voters with Disabilities**

(Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

February 11, 2026

Position: SUPPORT

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM), is the federally-mandated Protection and Advocacy agency of Maryland, charged with defending and advancing the rights of people with disabilities. DRM submits this testimony in support of SB 73, which strengthens accessible and expedited voting for older adult voters and voters with disabilities.

DRM strongly supports SB 73, which requires the State Board of Elections (SBE) to establish guidelines for local boards of election to better support of older adults and voters with disabilities in the voting process. The bill requires local election boards to seek feedback from voters with disabilities to identify and address barriers to access. By mandating clear statewide guidelines, SB 73 ensures that local boards implement consistent processes to accommodate and expedite voting at early voting centers and polling places. This ongoing commitment to accessibility will improve the voting experience of each election cycle, fostering greater participation in the electoral process.

Over the past few election cycles, voter participation among people with disabilities has continued to grow as access to the ballot box expands. In 2020, 62 percent of individuals with a disability turned out to vote, an

increase from 56 percent in 2016.¹ With an estimated 40.2 million eligible voters with disabilities in 2024, representing nearly one in six voters, election policies must consider accessibility to ensure participation. SB 73 advances this goal by providing expedited voting options, priority seating, and improved election worker training, all of which can help further reduce barriers to access.²

As more Americans with disabilities continue to engage in the electoral process, it is imperative to include specific requirements for election judges to follow to support these voters. SB 73 strengthens the election judge training program by requiring the SBE to include instruction on best practices for assisting older adult voters and voters with disabilities. Well-trained election judges are critical to ensuring that accessibility policies are implemented effectively and respectfully at polling places. Clear and consistent training helps prevent confusion, reduces the risk of improper denial of assistance, and promotes compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The guidelines for local boards to implement set forth under the bill to accommodate and expedite voting include dedicated expedited lines, clearly marked signage, priority seating, and specific provisions for high-traffic locations. DRM encourages the consideration of additional guidelines, such as communication support, including sign language interpreters or real-time captioning for voters with hearing disabilities, and visual aids or plain language instructions for voters with cognitive disabilities, to ensure that all voters with disabilities can participate independently

¹ <https://www.eac.gov/news/2021/07/07/new-data-177-million-americans-disabilitiesvoted2020-significant-increase-over>.

² https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Centers/Program_Disability_Research/Disability_Electorate_Projections_Report_Oct2024.pdf.

Further, SB 73 also requires local boards of elections to implement the State Board's accessibility guidelines and to collect feedback from older adult voters and voters with disabilities while voting is in progress. Local boards must make immediate adjustments as needed to ensure the accommodation and expedited voting process work effectively in real time. SBE is tasked with monitoring implementation and reporting annually to the General Assembly, including challenges, effectiveness, voter feedback, and recommendations for improvement. DRM supports this framework, as it allows issues to be addressed in real time for voters, and also works to resolve issues for future elections.

DRM is excited to see this legislation aimed at supporting older adults and community members with disabilities. We are available to provide technical assistance, guidance, or resources to the State Board of Elections to support the development and implementation of the proposed guidelines.

For these reasons, DRM requests a favorable report on SB 73.

Contact: Braden Stinar, Bradens@disabilityrightsmd.org or 443-692-2485

MaCCRA 2026 Testimony - Support - Senate Bill 73 -

Uploaded by: Bruce Hartung

Position: FAV



Maryland Continuing Care Residents Association
Protecting the Future of Continuing Care Residents
The Voice of Continuing Care Residents at Annapolis

SUBJECT: Senate Bill Senate Bill 73 - Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)
COMMITTEE: Senate Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee
The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
DATE: February 11, 2026
POSITION: **Favorable**

The Maryland Continuing Care Residents Association (MaCCRA) is a not-for-profit organization representing the residents in continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs). Maryland has over 20,000 older adults living in 38 licensed CCRCs. The principal purpose of MaCCRA is to protect and enhance the rights, well-being, and financial security of current and future residents while maintaining the viability of the providers whose interests are frequently the same as their residents. MaCCRA supports efforts to enhance transparency, accountability, financial security, and preserve existing protections in law and regulation for current and future CCRC residents statewide.

On behalf of the MaCCRA, we support Senate Bill 73.

The bill as drafted “requires the State Board of Elections (SBE) to establish guidelines for, and the local boards of elections to implement, a process to accommodate and expedite voting for elderly voters and voters with disabilities at early voting centers and polling places, beginning with the 2026 primary election. The existing election judge training program also must include instruction on best practices for assisting elderly voters and voters with disabilities. SBE must monitor the implementation of the guidelines and submit an annual report to the General Assembly by January 15 of each year.”

MaCCRA members appreciate efforts to ensure access to voting in addition to the other voting options (absentee ballots) and supports the specific requirements in the proposed guidelines to make voting easier for senior citizens.

We ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 73.

For further information please contact: Bruce Hartung, President
Maryland Continuing Care Residents Association c/o brucehartung@sbcglobal.net

SB 73 — Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Mar

Uploaded by: Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Position: FAV

February 9, 2026

The Honorable **Senator Brian J. Feldman**

Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for SB 73 — Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland

Dear Chair Feldman and Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan,

Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) is proud to support **Senate Bill 73**, *Election Law — Polling Place Procedures — Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)*, before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. This bill improves voter accessibility by requiring enhanced training for election judges and expedited procedures at polling places and early voting centers to better serve elderly voters and voters with disabilities.

Accessible voting is essential for Latino voters who are elderly, have disabilities, or face language and mobility challenges that can make long waits and chaotic systems prohibitive. By implementing clear guidelines and training, Maryland can reduce barriers that disproportionately suppress participation.

Implications for Latino and Immigrant Marylanders

Improving polling place accessibility directly supports freedom to participate. When voters with disabilities or language needs encounter welcoming, streamlined, and well-organized voting environments, turnout improves and communities feel seen and valued. MLU will collaborate with disability advocacy and community organizations to ensure guidelines include language access resources and culturally competent support.

MLU urges the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to report SB 73 favorably.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Communications and Public Affairs Specialist

Maryland Latinos Unidos

corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org

Favorable Testimony SB-89 021126 Miller.pdf

Uploaded by: Cynthia Miller

Position: FAV

February 11, 2026

Testimony SB 89

Election Law - Incarcerated Individuals - Voter Hotline and Eligibility

(Voting Rights for All Act)

Government, Labor, Elections Committee

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

As a lifelong resident of Maryland, and a pro-democracy activist in my work as co-lead of Third Act Maryland (an environmental and democracy focused organization of more than 1,000 Marylanders over 60), I strongly urge a favorable report for HB52/SB 89.

SB 89, the Voting Rights for All Act, expands voting access by establishing a voter hotline for incarcerated individuals and allowing people with felony convictions who are currently serving to vote. Throughout history, various discriminatory practices, such as literacy tests and strict voting requirements, have been implemented to suppress Black voters. By advancing **SB 89**, Maryland acknowledges this legacy and takes a significant step toward rectifying past injustices, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their circumstances, have the opportunity to participate in the democratic process.

Too many Americans have seen how our nation's prison system is used to silence the voices of millions of Americans at the ballot box.

According to the Sentencing Project, more than 16,000 Marylanders are currently disenfranchised due to criminal convictions in Maryland. It is time to give these Americans a voice in our democracy. Those who have finished serving a prison sentence for a felony need to take affirmative steps to register to vote. Many are unsure of their rights. They might know that being convicted of a felony affected their voting rights, but not the details: can they vote even if on probation? Do they need to take any additional steps to restore their voting rights? It would be much

simpler if someone returning from prison never lost their voting rights in the first place.

Denying the right to vote to those who are in prison is also problematic. Someone in prison is still part of society and has a voice that should be heard. Allowing and encouraging them to vote facilitates their return to life outside prison as a participating and engaged member of society. Punishment is meted out by a prison sentence and should not include suppressing a prisoner's voice.

SB 89 serves as a beacon of hope for Maryland's most silenced populations currently disenfranchised due to criminal convictions. Despite being most impacted by the criminal legal system, these individuals remain voiceless in our nation's electoral process. [Polling](#) by The Sentencing Project, Stand Up America, Common Cause, and State Innovation Exchange revealed that most Americans believe the right to vote should be an inalienable right for all Americans, extending to those who are currently serving sentences, both within and outside of prison walls.

SB 89 is a long-overdue step towards fulfilling the promise of our democracy, where every American has a voice and a stake in shaping our nation's future. Third Act Maryland and allies urge supporting this essential legislation and ensuring that all Americans can participate fully in our democratic processes.

SB 89 comprises a series of transformative measures designed to eradicate disenfranchisement and empower marginalized communities, including:

- Expansion of voting rights to Marylanders completing their sentences inside prison;
- Establishes a toll-free voter hotline for people in prison to receive information about voting, request voting materials, and report voting rights violations.

SB 89 represents a bold step towards a more just and equitable society, where the right to vote is not a privilege reserved for a select few but a fundamental right guaranteed to all Americans. By dismantling the barriers that bar tens of thousands of Marylanders from participating in our democracy, we can move closer to realizing the true essence of American democracy – a system of government that truly represents the will of all its people.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical step towards an inclusive democracy. We urge a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Miller, Third Act Maryland Co-Facilitator, District 27

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_SB73.pdf

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 11, 2026

Senate Bill 73

**Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters
With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 73 requires the State Board of Elections, as part of the training program for election judges, to include instruction on best practices for assisting elderly voters and voters with disabilities; requiring the Board to establish guidelines for the local boards of election to implement a process to accommodate and expedite voting for elderly voters and voters with disabilities at each early voting center and polling place; requiring the local boards to implement the guidelines and collect feedback on the process.

This bill aims to ensure equitable voting opportunities for individuals who face challenges due to disabilities or advanced age. Elderly voters and those with disabilities, such as visual or auditory impairments, often require additional support during the voting process. Without proper accommodations, these individuals may encounter significant barriers that discourage or even prevent them from participating in elections.

For example, voting alongside the general public during busy election periods can be overwhelming and stressful for those who need in-person assistance. Long wait times and crowded environments can create unnecessary complexity for individuals requiring help with navigation, communication, or accessing voting equipment. If adequate assistance is unavailable, it increases the likelihood that elderly or disabled voters may be unable to cast their ballots. Additionally, the physical accessibility of polling locations is a critical factor. In some geographic areas, polling places may lack sufficient parking accommodations or may include hazardous areas that are particularly challenging for elderly voters or those with

mobility issues. Collecting feedback from voters and volunteers can help identify and address these gaps, ensuring that polling locations are safe, accessible, and welcoming to all. Equally important is providing comprehensive training for election volunteers on the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other best practices for accommodating voters with disabilities.¹

Well-trained volunteers can better safeguard the voting experience for elderly and disabled individuals, ensuring they can exercise their fundamental right to vote without unnecessary obstacles. By implementing clear guidelines and proactive measures, this legislation would create a more inclusive and accessible voting process, empowering elderly and disabled voters to fully participate in both local and national elections. This is a vital step in promoting equity and upholding the democratic values of our society.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 73**.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <https://www.ada.gov/topics/voting/>

SB73-E_1.pdf

Uploaded by: Ihemanma Ugo-Akwada

Position: FAV

February 9, 2026

Testimony on SB 73

**Election Law – Polling Place Procedures – Voting by Elderly Voters with Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)
Education, Energy, and the Environment**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of SB 73, which creates new requirements for local Boards of Elections to expedite voting and provide accommodations for elderly voters and voters with disabilities at each early voting and polling place.

SB 73 is meant to improve and expedite voting process for elderly voters and voters with disabilities, requiring the State Board of Elections to create a process to accommodate them at each Early Voting Center and polling place within the State of Maryland. Improved guidelines include the maintenance of a separate, dedicated line for elderly voters and voters with disabilities and the addition of a waiting area with priority seating for the elderly and disabled. These new standards - along with the pre-existing option to use a “placeholder” in instances where a voter is unable to stand for long periods of time – will go a long way towards making polling and early voting locations as accessible as possible to all voters.

This legislation also improves the process for training election judges on best practices used to assist or accommodate elderly and disabled voters and requires local Boards of Elections to make clear signage available inside of polling sites that ensure voters are made aware of the assistance available to them when voting. We would ask the Committee to consider translating this signage into any other languages that are spoken widely within the jurisdiction, to ensure that no voter is left behind because they did not understand that there is assistance available to them.

Overall, SB 73 will help ensure future Maryland elections run smoothly, especially for elderly and disabled voters who would like to vote in-person. For these reasons, we request a favorable report.

SB0073 Testimony_McElroy.pdf

Uploaded by: Kristian McElroy

Position: FAV

Kristian McElroy
8509 Timber Pine Ct, Ellicott City, MD, 21043
2/9/2026

Bill # SB0073: Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

Position: Support

Greetings Senate Committee Chair and Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

My name is Kristian McElroy. I am a Maryland Howard County resident writing to provide testimony in support of Bill# SB0073.

As a voter with multiple disabilities, I first registered in 2002 during my senior year of high school. Despite this, I did not exercise my right to vote in a presidential election until 2012, and in a state election until 2022.

The barriers to voting were significant and deeply frustrating. My local polling sites at the time lacked basic accessibility features like seating and clear directions, making it nearly impossible for me to navigate the long lines. Furthermore, I struggled with the computer voting booths due to my physical disability, and there was a lack of support for using my alternative communication device.

My ability to find an accessible voting location was entirely dependent on my specific access needs for that day and the level of training and preparation of the polling staff. These experiences were devastating, preventing me from exercising a fundamental right that I saw my community members engaging in—a right my grandmother and ancestors fought to secure.

It is with this testimony and because ensuring all voting locations, policies, and procedures are accessible to everyone, including voters with disabilities and elderly voters is a civil right - I ask you to vote “yes” on SB0073.

Sincerely,

Kristian McElroy

Testimony in support of SB 0073, PDF.pdf

Uploaded by: Linda Cades

Position: FAV

Testimony in support of SB 0073

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 0073: Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters with Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland.

The right of all citizens to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy. Article 1 of our US Constitution gives states the responsibility for overseeing federal elections. Amendments to our United States Constitution, specifically the 14th, 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th specify the rights of all citizens to vote.

Article I of the Maryland Constitution... states that “every U.S. citizen, 18 or older, who is a resident, is entitled to vote. This is reinforced by the Declaration of Rights, Article 7, which affirms that elections must be free and frequent, ensuring the right of suffrage to qualified citizens.”

While all Maryland citizens have the right to vote, being able to exercise that right may be more difficult for people who are elderly or disabled. This bill requires Maryland to take actions to ensure voting access for these people.

I care about this issue because I am 79; my husband is 83. While we have always been able to vote in Maryland elections since we moved here in the early 1970's, our mobility is now somewhat impaired. We need reassurance that we will not encounter unnecessary obstacles to voting in this year's primaries and the 2026 mid-term elections.

In addition, we have a son, now 47, with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Like all other Maryland citizens, he has a right to vote. Issues arise every day that impact his health and well-being, now and in the future. For example, Governor Moore's budget proposal for FY27 cuts 155.5 million dollars from the budget for the Developmental Disabilities Administration, the agency which oversees and funds services for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Because this is Medicaid money, there is a federal match. If Maryland cuts \$155.5 million from DDA, they actually lose \$311 million. No agency can absorb that kind of budget cut without cutting services for the 20,000 Maryland citizens who depend upon them.

Finally, our elections are now at risk by the Trump administration's call to “nationalize” state elections and other threats to suppress voting rights. Trump supporter Steve Bannon has stated that: “We're going to have ICE surround the polls come November. We're not going to sit here and allow you to steal the country again,” Bannon said Tuesday on his podcast. “And you can whine and cry and throw your toys out of the pram all you want, but we will never again allow an election to be stolen.” All of these threats to voting rights are based on unproven assertions of voter fraud. Many studies have documented that voter fraud is extremely rare.

While such threats may not come to pass, those who manage our elections need to be prepared to enforce the rights of every citizen to vote, especially those who are elderly or

disabled. Election workers will need the training required by the bill to ensure that elections in Maryland remain free and fair as they have always been.

Please support Senate Bill 0073.

Senate Bill 0073 Support - Charlie B.pdf

Uploaded by: Liz Zogby

Position: FAV



SB 0073: Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland
February 11, 2026
Position: Support

The Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition (MDAC) is a coalition of the five Down syndrome organizations in Maryland as well as individuals with Down syndrome and their family members who have come together to advocate for improved quality of life for all individuals with Down syndrome throughout the state of Maryland. MDAC works in coalition with other disability and advocacy organizations across the state and supports many legislative and policy efforts.

MDAC strongly supports SB73, which would require the Board of Elections to make plans, offer training, and evaluate efforts to ensure voting accessibility for people with disabilities and the elderly.

SB73 is aligned with one of MDAC's guiding principles: "People with Down syndrome are able to participate in all aspects of civic life, including accessible voting, contributing to legislative advocacy, and communicating their views publicly." People with Down syndrome and other intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are able to vote in any election they see fit, "unless they are under guardianship and also found by a court to be unable to express desire to vote." ¹

My name is Charles Bouloukos and I live in Baltimore County. I am 27, I volunteer in my community regularly, and fitness is important to me. I love sports and music. And I have Down syndrome.

I have voted in three elections. The first time I voted, it was at the polling place near my house, and everyone was so nice. They said they were proud of me! In the other two elections, I took my ballot to a box. Before I voted, I learned about the candidates and then I made my decision about who stands for the things I think are important. I vote for candidates who believe in supporting people who might need extra help to succeed. I want people with Down syndrome and other disabilities to be represented. It is important to me to have a voice in who makes our laws.

It is important that I am able to vote. My right to vote is protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act. This bill calls for practical ways to make sure my friends and I can vote within the ADA. For these reasons, I support SB0073.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Submitted by,

Charles Bouloukos

¹ <https://disabilityrightsmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024-DRM-Voter-Information-1.pdf> - accessed February 2026

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POG_Testimony_SB73.pdf 9.pdf

Uploaded by: Mat Rice

Position: FAV



PEOPLE ON THE GO MARYLAND

TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 73 (SB 73)

Election Law – Polling Place Procedures – Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities
(Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

Sponsor: Senator Ellis

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

FAVORABLE

January 23, 2026

People On the Go Maryland (POG) is a statewide self advocacy/systems advocacy organization run for and by people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Our mission is to empower people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities to be full participants in their communities, exercise their civil rights, and make their own choices about their lives. We represent hundreds of self-advocates across Maryland who are committed to breaking down barriers and ensuring that people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities have equal opportunities in all aspects of civic life, including the fundamental right to vote.

People On the Go Maryland submits this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 73, legislation that will ensure accessible and expedited voting procedures for elderly voters and voters with disabilities, including people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. This bill represents a crucial step toward fulfilling the promise of equal access to the ballot box for all Marylanders.

Voting Rights as a Foundation of Self-Determination and Community Inclusion

The right to vote is one of the most fundamental expressions of citizenship and self-determination. For people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, casting a ballot is not just a civic duty—it is a powerful statement of independence and a vital component of full community inclusion. When barriers prevent people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities from voting, we are denied not only a constitutional right but also the opportunity to have a voice in decisions that directly affect our lives, from healthcare and transportation policy to education and employment law.

Federal laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), and the Voting Rights Act (VRA), establish a clear legal mandate: the entire voting process must be accessible to people with disabilities. These laws recognize that equal opportunity to vote is not optional—it is a civil right. Senate Bill 73 will help Maryland meet this legal imperative by creating concrete, enforceable procedures that ensure voters with disabilities, including people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, can exercise their right to vote with dignity, privacy, and independence.

Persistent Barriers Faced by Voters with Disabilities

Despite strong legal protections, voters with disabilities continue to face systemic barriers at polling places across the nation. According to research conducted by Rutgers University for the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, in the 2022 midterm elections, 14% of voters with disabilities reported experiencing difficulties when voting—more than three times the rate of voters without disabilities (4%). A 2016 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that 83% of polling places surveyed had at least one potential impediment for voters with disabilities.

For people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, these barriers can be particularly daunting. Long wait times at polling places create significant challenges for individuals who may have difficulty standing for extended periods, who may experience heightened anxiety in crowded and chaotic environments, or who may have sensory sensitivities that make waiting in line physically and emotionally overwhelming. Polling places that are poorly organized, lack clear signage, or have inadequately trained election judges can create confusion and stress, making the voting experience intimidating rather than empowering.

These barriers are not merely inconveniences—they directly suppress voter turnout. While the disability voter turnout gap has narrowed in recent years, it persists. In 2020, 61.8% of people with disabilities voted, compared to 67.5% of people without disabilities, a gap of 5.7 percentage points. If people with disabilities had voted at the same rate as demographically similar non-disabled citizens, an additional 1.75 million votes would have been cast. Crucially, the gap in voter registration is much smaller than the gap in turnout, demonstrating that the primary issue is not a lack of interest but rather the difficulties encountered during the act of voting itself.

How Senate Bill 73 Will Address These Barriers

Senate Bill 73 takes a comprehensive, proactive approach to ensuring that the voting process is accessible and efficient for elderly voters and voters with disabilities. The bill mandates that the State Board of Elections establish clear guidelines for local election boards to implement accommodation and expedited voting procedures at all early voting centers and polling places throughout Maryland. These are not suggestions—they are enforceable requirements.

Key Provisions Include:

- **Dedicated Expedited Lines:** The bill requires dedicated expedited lines for elderly voters and voters with disabilities. This directly addresses one of the most significant barriers—long wait times—and ensures that people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, who may struggle with extended waits, can vote without undue physical or emotional strain.
- **Clearly Marked Signage:** Clear, visible signage indicating the availability of expedited services helps voters with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities navigate the polling place more independently and with less confusion, reducing anxiety and supporting self-determination.
- **Priority Seating:** Priority seating in waiting areas provides a comfortable and less overwhelming environment for individuals who may need to rest or who may be sensitive to crowded, chaotic spaces.
- **Comprehensive Training for Election Judges:** The bill mandates that election judge training programs include instruction on best practices for assisting elderly voters and voters with disabilities, including people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Training will cover the rights of voters with disabilities under State and federal law and all accessibility features of the voting system. Well-trained election judges are the front line of accessible elections—they ensure that accommodations are provided respectfully, efficiently, and correctly.
- **Real-Time Feedback and Immediate Adjustments:** Local election boards must collect feedback from elderly voters and voters with disabilities during voting operations and make immediate adjustments as necessary. This ensures that problems are identified and solved in real time, not after the election is over.
- **Accountability Through Annual Reporting:** The State Board of Elections must submit an annual report to the General Assembly that includes an analysis of the effectiveness of accommodations, a summary of feedback received, and recommendations for improvement. This creates a system of continuous improvement and ensures that the voices of voters with disabilities are heard at the highest levels of government.

The Benefits for People with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities

This legislation will have a profound and positive impact on the ability of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities to exercise their right to vote. By removing barriers and creating a more welcoming, efficient, and supportive voting environment, Senate Bill 73 will:

- **Increase Voter Participation:** When barriers are removed, turnout increases. Accessible voting processes have been shown to close the disability voter turnout gap. More people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities will be able to vote, ensuring that our voices are represented in the democratic process.
- **Enhance Self-Determination:** Voting is a key expression of personal autonomy and self-advocacy. An accessible voting process affirms the dignity and civil rights of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and reinforces the principle that we have the right and the ability to make decisions about our own lives and our communities.
- **Foster Community Inclusion:** When people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities can participate fully in elections, it strengthens our connection to the community and demonstrates that we are valued and equal members of society. Accessible voting is a visible commitment to inclusion.
- **Strengthen Maryland Democracy:** A democracy is strongest when it represents all its citizens. By ensuring that people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities can vote with ease, Maryland will uphold the principles of equality and justice that are the foundation of our nation.

Conclusion

Senate Bill 73 represents a critical opportunity for Maryland to become a national leader in accessible voting. This legislation directly addresses the barriers that have prevented people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities from fully exercising our fundamental right to vote. It establishes clear, enforceable standards; requires comprehensive training for election officials; and creates mechanisms for real-time feedback and continuous improvement.

The evidence is clear: when voting is made accessible, participation increases, and democracy is strengthened. People On the Go Maryland urges this Committee to recognize that accessible voting is not a courtesy—it is a civil right. This bill will ensure that people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities can vote with the same dignity, privacy, and independence afforded to all citizens.

For these reasons, People On the Go Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 73.

For More Information, Contact:

Mat Rice, Executive Director

Email: mat@pogmd.org

Phone: 410-925-5706

SB73.DDCouncil.Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel London

Position: FAV



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

SB 73: Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

February 11, 2026

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 SB 73 as a step toward making Maryland a place where everyone can participate effectively in the electoral process.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- SB 73 requires the State Board of Elections to establish guidelines for an expedited voting process for older voters and voters with disabilities (the voters) that is accessible.
- It also requires local boards of elections to implement the guidelines, and collect feedback from the voters and make changes immediately as needed.

WHY is this legislation important?

- **Voting is a fundamental right that Marylanders 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.
- **Many polling places remain inaccessible for voters with disabilities.** The U.S. Election Commission found that 20% of voters with disabilities had trouble on Election Day due to accessibility at polling locations compared to 6% among voters without disabilities.
- **More accessible polling locations benefits all Marylanders.** When one group is served more efficiently, all voters are able to vote more efficiently. This means voters who are busy moms, college students, low-income families, and more can all expect a better experience at the polls. Everyone deserves to a smooth voting process so they can exercise their right to vote during every election cycle.

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: Rachel London, Executive Director, RLondon@md-council.org

217 E. Redwood Street, Suite 1300 • Baltimore, MD 21202 • 410.767.3670 • md-council.org

Dee Sapp, *Chairperson* • Rachel London, Esq., *Executive Director*

Testimony in support of SB0073 - Accessible and Ex

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0073_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

02/11/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#/0073- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0073, **Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)**

This bill is personal to me as a person living in a senior community of elderly and disabled persons while I use a cane and mobility scooter in my daily life. This bill will make voting easier for my cohort to make their voices heard in elections.

It will accomplish this goal by requiring the State Board of Elections, as part of the training program for election judges, to include instruction on best practices for assisting elderly voters and voters with disabilities; requiring the Board to establish guidelines for the local boards of election to implement a process to accommodate and expedite voting for elderly voters and voters with disabilities at each early voting center and polling place; requiring the local boards to implement the guidelines and collect feedback on the process; etc.

The collection of feedback component of the bill will let further adjustments occur in voting processes so that every voter affected by this bill can be assured Maryland is committed to making the process as simple and easy as possible.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0073.

SB 73 Elderly-Disabled Voting Statement Full Final

Uploaded by: Robert Doyle

Position: FAV



**Statement of the Maryland Federation of
National Active and Retired Federal Employees
Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee Hearing,
February 11, 2026
On SB 73 - Election Law – Polling Place Procedures –
Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters with Disabilities
(Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)**

(Position – FAV)

Good Afternoon, Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and members of the Education, Energy & the Environment Committee. I am Robert Doyle, Chair of the State Legislative Committee of the Maryland National 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 SB 73, Election Law – Polling Place Procedures – Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters with Disabilities (Accessible

and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland). We thank Senator Arthur Ellis for introducing this Bill.

The right to vote, which is a fundamental right and a foundation of our Democracy, remains more important than ever. We endorse the MD League of Women Voters view that “democratic government depends upon informed and active citizen participation, and that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed by law.”¹

SB 73 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 specific provisions for high-traffic early voting centers, 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. I have worked as an Election Judge in several

¹ Written Statement of Linda Kohn, League of Women Voters, on SB 66, Election Law – Polling Place Procedures – Voting By Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland), MD Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee Hearing, February 5, 2025.

recent elections and I know how hard my colleagues and I worked. But there are still instances where someone will fall through the cracks. For example, in the 2024 elections, I voted at an early voting polling place in Anne Arundel county and saw several older voters get discouraged and leave because they had no place to sit and wait for the long lines of voters.

Senator Ellis noted at the February 5, 2025 Education, Energy and the Environment Committee Hearing for his bill last year (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.'" We agree.

Finally, we note that SB 73 has the important requirement that the SBE will submit a report to the General Assembly after each election discussing any challenges to its guidelines, an analysis of how well the guidelines worked, a summary of feedback received by local boards on the effectiveness of the new guidelines, and any recommendations to improve the guidelines. This will help to

ensure that senior voters and voters with disabilities continue to receive the treatment they deserve to maintain their fundamental right to participate in our democracy.

When the SBE begins the work to establish these guidelines, we at MD NARFE look forward to participation in whatever public rulemaking process the SBE implements regarding the new guidelines

We respectfully ask that you give a favorable report to SB 73 as an important step in ensuring that MD seniors and persons with disabilities can maintain their fundamental right to vote.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate today.

Robert M. Doyle, Chair
Maryland Federation – NARFE
State Legislative Committee
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2.11.26.SB73AccessibleVotingAct.Fello.pdf

Uploaded by: Rylie Shewbridge

Position: FAV

February 11, 2026

Chair Brian J. Feldman
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB73 – Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Fello, we write in support of **SB73 – Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland.**

Across Maryland, Fello is building communities where people belong. With a team of more than 650 employees, Fello supports over 5,000 people with disabilities each year – creating opportunities that empower people to live the lives they choose. From advancing equity and respect to expanding access and connection, inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. One powerful way this comes to life is through Fello Communities: beautiful, safe, and accessible rental housing that offers choice and stability for residents across income levels, from affordable to market-rate homes.

Voting is a vital way for people with disabilities to experience full inclusion in their communities. It empowers people to participate in shaping policies that affect their daily lives and ensures their voices are heard. SB73 would require the State Board of Elections to establish guidelines for local election boards to implement processes that accommodate and expedite voting for elderly voters and voters with disabilities. It would also mandate training and best practices for election judges.

Providing dedicated lines, clear signage, and priority seating for elderly voters and voters with disabilities will help eliminate physical and systemic barriers that still exist. Additionally, this legislation would allow these voters to provide feedback on the voting process and collaborate with the State Board of Elections to further improve accessibility. SB73 is a crucial step in supporting the state’s ongoing efforts and commitment to removing barriers for elderly voters and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB73.

Sincerely,



Jonathon Rondeau
President & CEO

fello.

fello.org

410.269.1883



SB 73 Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Dis

Uploaded by: Sara Westrick

Position: FAV



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**SB 73 Election Law – Polling Place Procedures –
Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities
(Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 11, 2026
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. My name is Sara Westrick, Advocacy Director for AARP Maryland, and I am representing more than 850,000 AARP members across the state. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of SB 73, and we thank Senator Ellis for introducing this important legislation.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering people to live their best lives as they age. Our work focuses on issues that matter most to older adults and their families, including affordable utilities, financial security, health care access, protection from financial exploitation, and fostering voter engagement.

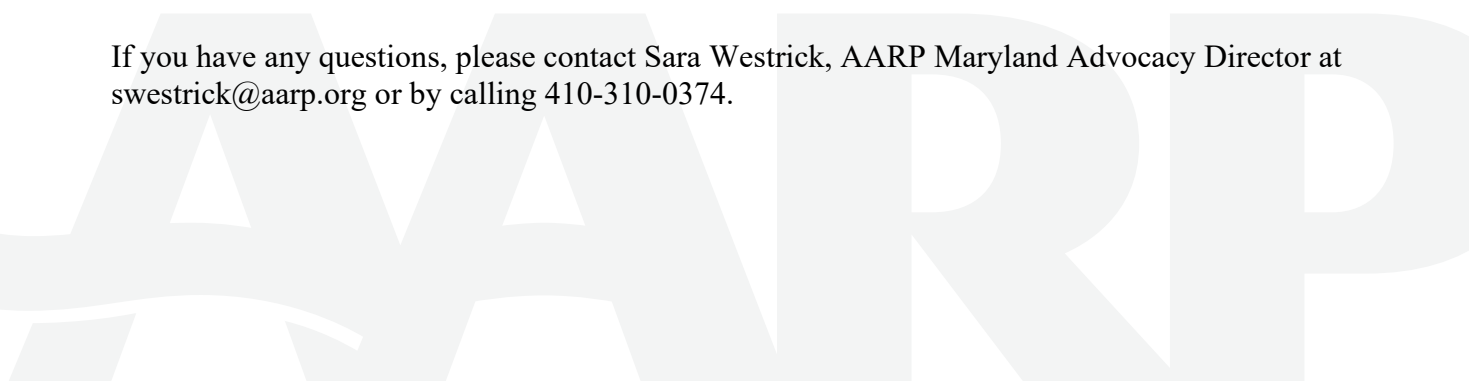
This bill takes meaningful steps to ensure that Marylanders age 65 and older can vote safely, comfortably, and with dignity. Our state's population is aging, and millions of residents over 65 rely on in-person voting to participate in our democracy. For many of these voters, long lines, extended wait times, standing for long periods, and crowded environments can be physically difficult or even dangerous. Current accommodations vary by polling place and are not applied consistently statewide, resulting in unpredictable experiences that discourage participation.

The bill requires the State Board of Elections to issue uniform guidelines for accommodating older voters at every early voting center and polling place. This means older voters will not have to guess which locations are prepared to support them. In addition, by establishing expedited lines and providing seating for older voters, the bill directly addresses long wait times that can lead to fatigue and health risks.

We believe that voting must be accessible to every Marylander, including those who have spent a lifetime contributing to our state and communities. SB 73 reduces barriers, improves safety, and honors the dignity of older Marylanders.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 73.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick, AARP Maryland Advocacy Director at swestrick@aarp.org or by calling 410-310-0374.



SB0073 Elderly and Disabled - Election Judge Trai

Uploaded by: Mary Nelson

Position: UNF

Witness: Mary Nelson mgn136@gmail.com 443-485-0255
Jurisdiction: Cecil County

SB0073 Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

UNFAVORABLE

Each polling place is different and will need to adjust for elderly and disabled voters. That topic is already being covered in Election Judge Training and does not need individual regulation and red tape by the State Board of Elections. There is quite enough paperwork in the election process.

I request an UNFAVORABLE VOTE

Final SB73 -2026.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: John Michael Gudger

Position: INFO



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 11, 2026

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SB73 - Information

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) is the professional membership organization representing local election officials and Election Boards across all 24 jurisdictions in the state. Our members are dedicated to ensuring the smooth and effective administration of elections, and we are deeply committed to making Maryland elections accessible, secure, and fair.

MAEO appreciates the intent behind Senate Bill 73 to improve voting access for elderly voters and voters with disabilities. Maryland election judges already receive training on assisting voters with diverse needs, ensuring accessibility without requiring individuals to disclose personal information. We offer a program that allows anyone to choose to sit and wait for their turn to check in rather than standing in line, if they so choose. Additionally, any voter, regardless of ability or disability, has access to a Ballot Marking Device (BMD) in the polling place, an accessible option and alternative to voters marking their ballots by hand. Lastly, some voting locations do not have the necessary space to fulfill the "dedicated expedited lines" and "priority seating in waiting areas" as outlined in the text of the bill.

We also wish to provide information on potential legal considerations related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Under the ADA, election workers cannot ask voters if they have a disability, and Maryland does not require voter ID, making age verification impractical. Additionally, the bill's requirement to **segregate** voters into dedicated expedited lines could raise privacy concerns or create unintended barriers if voters feel pressured to disclose a disability.

MAEO remains committed to facilitating accessible elections and appreciates the opportunity to provide information on election administration considerations related to this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.