

February 23, 2026

The Honorable Melissa Wells

Chair, Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

The Honorable Kenneth Kerr

Vice Chair, Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

145 & 142 Lowe House Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 964 Secure the Vote Act of 2026

Dear Chair Wells, Vice-Chair Kerr and Members;

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 964, the Secure the Vote Act of 2026. This legislation represents an important step toward restoring confidence in Maryland's election process and strengthening the integrity of our voting system.

Concerns about election security are not new. For example, the 1994 gubernatorial election, I have questioned whether our system is sufficiently transparent and secure. I was a Sauerbrey campaign volunteer and I vividly recall that Ellen Sauerbrey was ahead by approximately 30,000 votes when the ballot count in Baltimore City was stopped. When counting resumed, she trailed by roughly 5,000 votes, and her opponent, Paris Glendening ultimately assumed the office of governor. For weeks, the Sauerbrey campaign was denied access to voting machines and related records. Regardless of one's political affiliation, such circumstances should never occur in a system that is expected to be open, secure, and beyond reproach. Public trust, once lost, is difficult to restore.

Unfortunately, as our election system has grown more complex, many voters feel that transparency has diminished rather than improved. Close races that shift significantly after mail-in ballots are counted raise concerns among voters. When large volumes of ballots are handled outside the protections of traditional in-person voting procedures, both security and accuracy are compromised.

I believe Maryland should return to a more controlled absentee ballot process and reconsider widespread mail-in voting practices. In 2024, I served as a canvass observer in Montgomery County and personally witnessed returned mail ballots that lacked postmarks. I was later informed that the members of the Montgomery County Board of Elections had requested that the Rockville Post Office *not* postmark returned ballots due to confusion it was allegedly causing. Instead, officials relied on voter attestation that the ballot was completed on or before Election Day. While attestation has a role, objective safeguards such as postmarks provide additional reassurance and verification.

Mail-in ballot drop boxes also present challenges. They do not provide assurance that ballots are cast free from coercion or undue influence. Questions naturally arise: Is the individual completing the ballot the intended voter? Could family members or others improperly influence the vote? Are ballots being sent to outdated addresses and potentially misused? Even if such occurrences are rare, the mere possibility undermines public confidence. In this respect, in-person voting remains the most direct and transparent method of casting a ballot.

One of the most widely supported provisions of HB 964 is voter identification. Polling consistently shows that a strong majority of Republicans, Democrats, and unaffiliated voters support voter ID requirements at polling locations. It is an 80% or better issue. The people want it and Maryland should pass it. Clear identification standards protect against fraud and strengthen voter confidence. Mail-in voting, by contrast, does not provide the same level of direct verification.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to give HB 964, the Secure the Vote Act of 2026, a favorable report. Maryland citizens deserve an election system that is secure, transparent, and worthy of their full confidence.

Sincerely,

Sallie B. Taylor

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