



MARYLAND FORWARD PARTY

Not Left. Not Right. Forward.

BILL NO: HB0221

TITLE: Election Law – Primary Elections – Change of Political Party Affiliation

COMMITTEE: Government, Labor and Elections

POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

DATE: February 4, 2026

TO: Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee

FROM: Maryland Forward Party,

SUBJECT: Supporting Meaningful Ballot Access (with Amendments)

Maryland Forward Party, representing a growing coalition including the state's large Unaffiliated population, **supports HB0221 with amendments**. We appreciate the effort to expand access to primary elections by allowing voters to change party affiliation during early voting or on election day.

HB0221 is a meaningful step forward compared to the current law, as it reduces procedural barriers that prevent many voters from engaging in the nomination process. However, Maryland's unaffiliated voters should not be required to formally join a political party simply to have a voice in publicly funded primary elections.

To ensure a more voter-centered approach, we respectfully request **amending HB0221 to align it with the inclusive framework reflected in HB0496**, which allows unaffiliated voters to choose a party ballot without being forced into partisan affiliation.

Maryland Forward Party believes reforms should prioritize voter access by removing procedural hurdles. We thank the sponsor for this initiative and urge a report of **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** on HB0221.

Sincerely,

Lee Bradshaw

Legislative Committee Chair

Maryland Forward Party