

Testimony in Favor with Amendments

House Bill 641 – Election Law – Curbside Voting – Pilot Program

Before the House Committee on Government, Labor, and Elections

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is The Honorable, Dr. Cashenna A. Cross. I serve as Councilwoman-at-Large for the City of Glenarden and as a municipal advocate committed to protecting voting access while safeguarding election integrity. I submit this testimony in support of House Bill 641 establishing a time-limited, data-driven Curbside Voting Pilot Program, with targeted amendments to strengthen security, transparency, and consistent implementation.

What HB 641 Does

HB 641 creates a statewide pilot to test curbside voting—defined as completing and casting a ballot at an outside location designated by the local board, under observation of election judges. The State Board, in conjunction with local boards, must implement the program and designate one small, one medium, and one large county to participate.

Why This Matters

Curbside voting can reduce barriers for voters who face transportation, mobility, health, or caregiving constraints—without requiring them to forgo privacy or participation. Done well, it can be a practical accessibility option during early voting and on Election Day, particularly when locations are selected with equity and access in mind.

Safeguards Already In the Bill

- Location selection must consider accessibility to historically disenfranchised communities, proximity to dense concentrations of voters, access by public transportation, and maximizing voter participation (including community centers and public gathering places).
- Curbside voting must be available to any registered voter on request during the hours early voting centers and polling places are open.
- Each curbside location must allow voters to complete a ballot without assistance unless requested, while preserving ballot secrecy.
- Local boards must establish electioneering/canvassing boundaries around the curbside location and around vehicles waiting in line, and must post signage and ensure prompt service.
- Voters must be checked in through the pollbook and may choose a paper ballot (deposited in a container) or a ballot marking device brought outside to the voter.

Recommended Amendments

- Require uniform minimum security and chain-of-custody procedures in regulation (e.g., sealed transport containers, bipartisan judge handling protocols, and incident documentation) for all curbside

ballots and devices.

- Add mandatory pilot evaluation metrics and public reporting elements (wait times, usage rates, accessibility outcomes, equipment issues, and any security or process incidents), broken down by early voting vs. Election Day and by participating county.
- Clarify staffing and training requirements for curbside operations (including de-escalation, disability accommodations, language access, and maintaining voter privacy in outdoor settings).
- Provide an explicit funding and reimbursement framework so the pilot does not divert resources from baseline polling place operations.

Conclusion

HB 641 is thoughtfully structured as a pilot with clear location criteria and voter-protection requirements, and it sunsets after the pilot period. With the amendments above, Maryland can responsibly test curbside voting in a way that expands access, protects secrecy, and preserves public confidence in election administration.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable, Dr. Cashenna A. Cross
Councilwoman-at-Large, City of Glenarden
Municipal Advocate
Phone: 571-719-8784