



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

**HB 44: Election Law - Petitions and Ballot Questions – Contents, Plain Language Requirement,
and Procedures**

February 4, 2026

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. As such, we support efforts to increase access to civil rights, like voting for people with disabilities. HB 44 does just that.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- HB 44 makes changes to the way that petitions for new ballot questions and questions on a ballot are written. It requires that they are written in plain language, contain a brief summary of the practical outcome, and prohibits the use of passive voice, legal jargon, and double negatives.
- Plain language is a way of writing so that all people can understand information the first time they read it.

WHY is this legislation important?

- **This bill makes voting more accessible for people with disabilities.** Voting is a fundamental right for all Marylanders. But voters with developmental disabilities face barriers. The U.S. Election Commission found that 20% of voters with disabilities face difficulties with voting, compared to 6% of voters without disabilities. These difficulties can be eliminated.
- **Writing ballot petitions and questions in plain language benefits everyone.** Many ballot questions can be confusing and hard to understand for people with and without disabilities. Using plain language makes it easier for everyone. Everyone deserves a smooth voting process so they can exercise their right to vote during every election.

Since 2024, we have worked closely with state agencies to implement the Governor's Plain Language Executive Order (EO 01.01.2024.25). Together, we developed Maryland's Plain Language Standards, training, resources, tools, and pilot projects to increase the use of plain language across State government. Given the State's ongoing efforts to help state agencies, offices, and boards use plain language, HB 44 makes sense.

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