



NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF THE BLIND
MARYLAND

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From: Ronza Othman, President
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To: House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee to give a favorable report to HB0641. This bill establishes a pilot for voters with disabilities to be able to vote curbside in that the local Board of Elections would bring the ballot – including the Electronic Ballot Marking Device – to the voter's vehicle so they could vote without having to leave their car.

Our support of this bill is contingent on amendments we understand have been submitted by the sponsor. These amendments:

1. Ensure that there is a policy and process for chain of custody of the voted ballot as it is transported from the voter in the vehicle to the ballot scanner;
2. Ensure that there is a policy related to privacy given that there may be other individuals in the vehicle who can see the voter's choices; and
3. Ensure that the voter will receive notification once their ballot has been scanned.

This bill is intended to increase voter participation at the polls for those with disabilities. This is critically important given that the number of people with disabilities is rising, and voting is among the most important responsibilities an American has. However, this method of voting, while necessary particularly for voters with disabilities related to ambulation, is not a one-size-fits-all solution to the myriad of other challenges voters with disabilities have. It does not, for example, solve the discrimination voters who are blind and print disabled experience by being forced to return a paper absentee ballot. What this bill does is eliminate a barrier that some individuals with mobility disabilities face when trying to vote in person.

For those reasons, we ask for a favorable report on HB0641. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.

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