



Position: Favorable
Government, Labor and Election Committee
HB0050/SB0005: General Assembly- Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office

To: The Honorable Delegates Wells, Kerr, Chisholm, Ciliberti, Clippinger, Crutchfield, Fair, Fisher, Lehman, Ruth, Sample-Hughes and Schindler

Greetings Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee,

My name is Patricia Watson, and I am writing today on behalf of Black Girls Vote, a nonpartisan civic engagement organization focused on voter education, access, and participation.

At Black Girls Vote, we do not tell people who to vote for or what party to support. Our work is about ensuring that voters understand the process, trust the system, and feel confident that their voices matter—especially when it comes to representation. In addition to advocating for voter access and rights, we also encourage community members to see themselves as part of the solution—not only as voters and advocates, but as potential candidates and leaders. We regularly remind people that if they want change, they have the power to be that change.

Vacancies in the General Assembly can create real confusion and disengagement among voters. In the communities we serve, people often ask a simple question: *Who represents me right now, and how did they get there?* When seats are filled without a direct vote, many voters—particularly those already navigating barriers to participation—feel disconnected from the democratic process.

Holding special elections at the same time as regularly scheduled statewide primary and general elections helps uphold a basic democratic expectation: that voters should have a clear, reliable opportunity to participate in choosing their representatives. When election schedules are aligned, voters are not required to track additional dates, navigate last-minute changes, or request extra time off simply to exercise a fundamental right. Aligning elections respects voters' time, work obligations, and caregiving responsibilities, and recognizes that participation should fit within the rhythms of people's lives—not require special accommodation to access it.

From a voter engagement perspective, consistent scheduling matters. Clear and predictable election timelines help ensure that participation is broadly accessible, rather than limited to those with flexible schedules, insider knowledge, or additional resources. When election processes are aligned and transparent, trust in the system grows.

This clarity also supports individuals who may one day consider running for office themselves. Transparent, accessible election practices reinforce that representation and leadership are open to the communities being served.



info@blackgirlsvote.com
www.BlackGirlsVote.com

Our goal is simple: when Marylanders are called upon to select their representatives, they should have a meaningful, understandable, and accessible opportunity to do so—because democracy works best when people trust both the process and the outcome.

Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to protecting voter access, participation, and confidence in Maryland's democratic institutions.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Lynn Watson, Advocacy Committee
Black Girls Vote, Inc.
Email: PWatson@blackgirlsvote.com