

HB0496

FAV

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Testimony to the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
In Support of HB0496
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Dear Chair and Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

I'm am testifying today in support of HB0496.

Opening Maryland's primaries will provide several key benefits to all citizens of "the Old Line State," but in particular, our veteran population.

Veterans selflessly serve and sacrifice for ALL Americans, not only Red or Blue Americans, but ALL Americans.

Therefore our primary elections should mirror this - where ALL citizens should be able to have a say in the election that will most likely determine their respective representation--the Primaries.

Inclusion is exactly what organizations such as *Veterans for all Voters, Independent Veterans of America, Open Primaries*, etc., work tirelessly to promote — a government “for the people—by the people.”

Participation fosters ownership, and the feeling of ownership is vital to a healthy democracy.

According to surveys cited from the *Independent Veterans of America*—over 50% of vets nationwide self-identify as Independent or unaffiliated. If that directly translates into votes, millions of veterans across our country can't exercise a right they sacrificed so much to protect and defend.

As a people, being willing to accept “exclusion,” or unnecessarily forcing registration with a private entity to gain “inclusion” to publicly funded civil processes is at odds with our basic democratic principles and values.

About 20 hours ago I was in Doha Qatar for work - I just traveled about 7,000 miles to testify.

This is how important HB0496 is to me.

I stand before you today as a fellow citizen, a neighbor, a husband, a father, and a retired combat veteran who has served this nation selflessly for over 26 years—please let me vote!

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,
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