



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 641

Election Law – Curbside Voting – Pilot Program

Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections

Hearing Date: February 18, 2026

Time: 1:00 PM

Bill Sponsors:

Primary Sponsor: Delegate Williams

Cosponsors: Delegates Coley, Foley, Hill, Lehman, Martinez, Moon, Palakovich Carr, Solomon, Spiegel, Stinnett, Taveras, Wells, and Wilkins

Position: FAVORABLE

This testimony is submitted by Matt Rice on behalf of People on the Go Maryland.

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

People on the Go Maryland is a statewide self-advocacy and system advocacy organization run for and by people with intellectual and /or developmental disabilities (I/DD). We write in strong support of HB 641, the Curbside Voting Pilot Program, and respectfully request a favorable report.

Voting is a fundamental right of citizenship. For many Marylanders with disabilities, exercising this right remains challenging due to barriers at polling places. HB 641 addresses these barriers by establishing a pilot program to test curbside voting in Maryland—a practical solution that will make voting more accessible for our community.

Why Curbside Voting Matters for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

People with I/DD face significant barriers when trying to vote in person. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, 83% of polling places in 2016 had at least one potential barrier for voters with disabilities. These barriers include steps without ramps, narrow doorways, crowded

spaces, and inadequate accessible voting equipment.

Curbside voting removes many of these physical barriers. It allows voters to cast their ballots from an accessible location outside the polling place—often their vehicle—while still participating in the in-person voting experience. This is especially important because:

- Self-determination is a core value for people with disabilities. Voting independently allows us to express our views and influence policies that directly affect our lives, including funding for disability services and support programs.
- Physical barriers can be unpredictable. A voter may arrive at a polling place only to discover it is not accessible as expected. Curbside voting provides a reliable alternative.
- Some individuals with I/DD may experience sensory overload in crowded or noisy environments. Curbside voting offers a calmer option that still provides the security and immediacy of in-person voting.

Federal laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) require accessible voting options. HB 641 aligns with these requirements and demonstrates Maryland's commitment to ensuring all eligible citizens can participate in our democracy.

The Importance of Ballot Submission Confirmation for Voters with Sensory Disabilities

While we strongly support HB 641 as written, we also advocate for ballot notification systems that confirm when a voter's ballot has been successfully submitted. This feature is especially important for voters who are blind or have other sensory disabilities.

For voters who cannot visually verify that their ballot was properly deposited, a confirmation notification provides essential peace of mind. Research from the University of Southern California's Center for Inclusive Democracy found that voters who used ballot tracking tools during the 2022 elections reported significantly higher confidence in the electoral process compared to those who did not use such tools.

Currently, 47 states and the District of Columbia offer some form of ballot tracking, covering 94% of eligible voters nationwide. Expanding notification systems to include confirmation of successful ballot submission would benefit all voters, but is particularly meaningful for those who rely on non-visual methods to navigate the voting process.

We encourage the Committee to consider how notification features can be integrated into the curbside voting pilot program to ensure that voters with sensory disabilities have full confidence that their voices have been heard.

Supporting Research and Evidence

The need for accessible voting options like curbside voting is well-documented:

- The MIT Election Data + Science Lab reports that 14% of voters with disabilities experienced difficulties voting in 2022, compared to improvements seen in 2020 when expanded mail and curbside options were available.
- The National Disability Rights Network emphasizes that no single voting method works for everyone—a variety of accessible options is essential to ensure full participation.
- Studies show that when accessible voting options are available, voter participation among people with disabilities increases, strengthening our democracy.

HB 641 thoughtfully addresses accessibility by requiring pilot counties to consider factors such as proximity to public transportation, accessibility for historically disenfranchised communities, and maximizing voter participation through community-centered locations.

Conclusion

People on the Go Maryland believes that every eligible voter should be able to cast their ballot privately, independently, and with confidence. HB 641 represents an important step toward achieving this goal for Marylanders with disabilities.

We respectfully ask the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 641.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to accessible elections in Maryland.

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