

Testimony in Support with Amendments House Bill 830 – Election Law – Absentee Ballots – Signature Requirements and Verification

Good afternoon Chair, Vice Chair, and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is The Honorable, Dr. Cashenna A. Cross. I appear before you today as a municipal leader, a United States Air Force veteran, and a lifelong advocate for civic participation and public trust. Throughout my career in public service — from military leadership to local governance — I have worked to strengthen systems that ensure both accountability and access. I respectfully offer testimony in support of House Bill 830, with amendments, because the integrity of elections and the confidence of voters must advance together, not in competition with one another.

House Bill 830 recognizes an important principle: voters must have confidence that every lawful ballot is protected and that election procedures are applied consistently across jurisdictions. Signature verification and clear standards for absentee ballots can help reinforce transparency, reduce disputes, and strengthen public confidence in election outcomes. At the same time, Maryland's election framework must continue to safeguard participation for seniors, working families, individuals with disabilities, military families, and voters who rely on absentee voting as their primary method of civic engagement. Election security succeeds only when it is balanced with accessibility.

For that reason, I respectfully recommend the following amendments to ensure the bill achieves its intended purpose without unintentionally disenfranchising eligible voters:

- Establish a uniform statewide cure process allowing voters to correct missing or mismatched signatures within a defined notification period before ballot rejection.
- Require standardized training and certification for local election officials conducting signature verification to ensure consistency across all counties.
- Provide state funding assistance and implementation guidance so local boards are not financially burdened by required verification technology.
- Allow alternative identity confirmation methods for voters whose signatures may change due to age, disability, or medical conditions.
- Require public reporting on rejected absentee ballots, including reasons for rejection, to promote transparency and continuous improvement.

These amendments preserve the intent of House Bill 830 while ensuring Maryland does not create barriers for lawful voters acting in good faith. As someone who has trained thousands of leaders and worked alongside service members deployed around the world, I understand

that systems earn trust when they are fair, consistent, and humane. Our responsibility is not only to protect ballots, but to protect the voter behind the ballot. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report with amendments. Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable, Dr. Cashenna A. Cross Councilwoman-at-Large, City of Glenarden United States Air Force Veteran Municipal Advocate 571-719-8784