



**TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT, LABOR, AND ELECTIONS
COMMITTEE**

HB 221 Election Law – Primary Elections – Change of Political Party Affiliation

POSITION: Favorable

By: Linda Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) promotes an open governmental system that is representative, accountable, and responsive. **We encourage electoral methods that provide the broadest voter representation possible and are expressive of voter choices.**

Voter apathy remains a nationwide problem in primary elections, with approximately 20% of registered voters casting ballots in 2024. In Maryland, that number was slightly higher at 27%. This low voter turnout results in disproportionate power for a subgroup of voters who tend to elect similar leaders. And many voters feel that they have no say in who will represent them. This results in primary voters being less representative of the eligible voting population than in a general election.

As of December 2025, more than 1,000,000 registered Maryland voters—approximately 25 percent of the electorate—were unable to cast a ballot in primary elections for partisan offices, leaving only nonpartisan roles such as local Boards of Education available to them. Excluding one-quarter of registered voters from meaningful participation in primary elections undermines the principles of fair and free elections and does a disservice not only to Maryland voters but also to candidates who are denied the opportunity to earn their support.

The League strongly urges the committee to give a favorable report on HB 221.

<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/press-release/voters-dont-participate-primaries/>
https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/2024_stats/Official%20by%20Party%20and%20County.pdf
<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/the-effect-of-open-primaries-on-turnout-and-representation/>
<https://www.uniteamericainstitute.org/research/the-primary-problem>
https://elections.maryland.gov/pdf/vrar/MSR-2025_12.pdf