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To: House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee to give an unfavorable report to HB0462. This bill would require an election judge to establish a voter's identity by requiring the voter to present a valid government-issued photo identification or a valid non-government-issued photo identification, and a current bill, statement, or check that states the voter's name and address as proof of identity; require a voter to vote a provisional ballot if the voter is unable to provide certain proof of identity; and prohibit a person from knowingly and willfully voting or attempting to vote under a false form of identification.

The bill as written presents a significant barrier to voting for blind and low-vision voters. In order to acquire a state-issued form of photo identification, blind voters must have such identification issued by the department of motor Vehicles. Because they primarily serve drivers, DMV offices are not always accessible to blind voters, as they are not on public transportation routes. These voters must therefore incur a significant amount of planning and expense in order to obtain this identification. While the bill also permits a non-state-issued photo ID, these can also be difficult to obtain unless the voter is or has been a student, member of the military, or another individual with a status that requires or confers such identification. Adding the requirement that the voter also provide proof of their address presents an additional barrier. Blind voters cannot read printed utility bills or other documents that could be used to prove their address. Often these individuals do not receive paper bills at all, as these bills are inherently inaccessible to them, and pay their bills online or over the phone. Furthermore, they do not have printers to generate paper copies of bills or receipts. Finally, in-person voter fraud, which is the only kind of voter fraud this bill could theoretically prevent, is virtually nonexistent, as established repeatedly over the years by various studies.

For these reasons, we ask for an unfavorable report on HB0462. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.

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