

BARBARA NOVEAU, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
DO THE MOST GOOD—MONTGOMERY COUNTY

BILL NO: HB37

DATE: January 16, 2020

BILL TITLE: REFERENCES TO ABSENTEE VOTING IN COMMUNICATIONS—MAIL-IN VOTING

COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee

POSITION: *SUPPORT* **BILL CONTACT:** Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr

To: The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair, House Ways and Means Committee and Committee Members,

I am the executive director of DoTheMostGood—Montgomery County, a progressive organization with more than 1500 members. One of the major priorities of our organization is to enlarge the number of registered voters and to support the enactment of legislation that facilitates voting.

A vibrant democracy is one that allows an educated citizenry to shape laws and policies that affect them through the fair election of officials, encourages adult citizens to vote, and makes it easy for those citizens to register and vote.

DotheMostGood strongly supports the enactment of this proposed legislation which provides that state and local election boards in their communications with voters refer to “mail-in ballots” and “mail-in voting” rather than using the antiquated and misleading terms, “absentee ballots” and “absentee voting.” The term “absentee” suggests that the only citizens who may vote my mail are those who have a legitimate reason (such as being out of town on travel) why they cannot go to the polls and vote on election day. In Maryland, no excuse is needed to vote “absentee” and all registered voters may request, receive, and submit their ballot prior to Election Day via the mail.

Many citizens, who are not on travel, also find it difficult to vote on Election Day for reasons such as work hours, inclement weather, childcare responsibilities, a lack of transportation, or physical challenges which make going to the polls either impossible or quite difficult. Typically, many of these voters are from populations that have been historically underrepresented at the polls. By allowing anyone to request voting my mail, Maryland recognizes these challenges. Accordingly, now is the time to update terminology, prior to the 2020 elections, to make clear to all Maryland citizens that voting by mail is a viable option.

By enacting this legislation, Maryland would be taking an important, invaluable step towards increasing voter turnout, something DotheMostGood strongly supports.

Therefore, DoTheMostGood recommends a **FAVORABLE** report on HB37.

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