



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 1589 - Election Law - Time Off for Employee Voting

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents

Date: March 3, 2020

The League of Women Voters believes that voting is a fundamental right that must be protected for all citizens. A healthy democracy depends on informed and active citizen participation. Maryland has made great strides in removing legal and practical barriers to voter participation.

Maryland law currently requires that employers provide time off for Maryland residents to vote if they do not have two hours off-duty while the polls are open. There is not a similar protection, however, for residents of other states who work in Maryland. Particularly in the metropolitan Washington area, many workers may have insufficient time to reach their polling place outside normal working hours. This bill would protect those citizens' right to vote by requiring employers to allow time off on election day. Under current law, an employee who requests time off for voting may be required to present proof of voting on a form prescribed by the Maryland State Board of Elections, which would not be applicable in other states. The bill would add flexibility to this requirement by specifying that the employee shall furnish "reasonable proof" of voting or attempting to vote. The bill further safeguards the right to vote by prohibiting discrimination or retaliation against an employee for taking time off under this bill.

The LWVMD, representing more than 1,400 concerned citizens throughout Maryland, strongly urges a favorable report on HB 1589.