



January 28, 2020

Chairman Paul G. Pinsky
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

On behalf of EveryDistrict Action Fund, I am proud to provide this written testimony in **SUPPORT** of SB 145 Election Law – References to Absentee Voting in Communications – Mail-in Voting being heard before the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee today.

EveryDistrict Action Fund is a 501(c)(4) organization focused on advancing voting rights issues in states across the country. In March 2019, we published our *Blue States Report*, which documented how legislatures can advance voting rights reform on pressing issues like increasing early voting, reducing voter waiting times, and expanding access to mail-in voting.

Maryland should be applauded for its progress in many areas of voting rights reform, but it still lags behind in the key best practice of mail-in voting. While Maryland has adopted the wise practice of so-called no excuse absentee voting, the framing of that term “absentee” sends the wrong message to voters. Instead, “mail-in voting” clarifies what this voting option is about: a way to give all voters the choice to vote in a way that works best for them.

Our nationwide research has confirmed that encouraging more people to use mail-in voting options gives voters choice and flexibility that helps to increase voter participation, reduce racial disparities, and better manage polling place lines and crowding. SB 145 and its House companion HB 37 provide an elegant way to clarify the choices available to Maryland voters. We thank Senator Hester and Delegate Palakovich Carr for their leadership and respectfully request that the Committee advance this legislation.

While I am not able to attend today’s hearing, I would be happy to answer any questions that the Chairman or Committee may have regarding our voting rights research. Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole Hobbs
Executive Director, EveryDistrict Action Fund