

SB 408 - SUPPORT

Members of the Committee,

My name is Crosby King. I am working with Indivisible Towson on a project called EZ-Vote, which would make it possible for every voter in Maryland to vote by mail.

There are three states that currently use vote by mail: OR, WA and CO. They get great turnout in each election. In fact, in 2018 those three states ranked in the top eight. Rockville switched to vote by mail before the municipal elections last year, and turnout almost doubled from 2015, from 15% to 27%.

Maryland can be and should be the fourth state to adopt vote by mail. We've got a good system to build on. While other states have been erecting barriers to voting, Maryland has been making it easier, with early voting, automatic registration, no-excuse absentee voting and Election Day registration. Now it's time to go the rest of the way.

We have modeled EZ-Vote after the system Colorado implemented five years ago. Every single registered voter in Colorado is mailed a ballot a month before the election. They fill out the ballot whenever and wherever they want. Voters have three ways to vote:

1. Just mail the ballot back,
2. Drop it off at a nearby dropbox, OR
3. If they need assistance, or if they haven't received a ballot, they can go to their county's vote center and vote there.

Ballots are sent to the state board of elections and are scanned and counted in the usual manner.

Voting by mail will help people who encounter barriers to voting, such as:

- Finding time to vote. Some people have to raise kids AND work. This gives them freedom to vote whenever they want to.
- Lack of transportation. No car? No problem.
- Bad weather. Raining outside? Vote from home, stay dry!
- Money. There is no cost to the voter, who will no longer have to take time off from work.
- Physical barriers. Sometimes polling places are inaccessible to people with disabilities. That will no longer be a problem.

Voting by mail will also save the state money. There will be far fewer voting booths and less staff needed. That's a big deal. The last time Maryland bought new machines, it cost us \$29 million.

In 2016, Pew Research did a cost analysis of Colorado's system after it shifted to voting by mail. It found that costs decreased by an average of 40% in five categories.

Voting by mail boosts turnout and saves money. It strengthens democracy. It's time to bring it to Maryland.