

SB 408 - Common Cause MD - Favorable

Uploaded by: ANTOINE, JOANNE

Position: FAV

February 20, 2020

Testimony on SB 408
Department of Legislative Services - Voting by Mail - Study
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 408, which would require the Department of Legislative Services in consultation with the State Board of Elections and Maryland Association of Election Officials study and make recommendation on voting by mail.

Currently, Maryland voters have the option of voting at an early voting center prior to Election Day or by absentee. While many have taken advantage of both programs, we believe there is more the state can do to drive participation and make voting more convenient. The act of voting can be a burdensome process for many eligible voters who want to participate. Most registered voters cite conflicting schedules, inconvenient hours, and accessibility as their reason for not voting. A vote by mail system would help to address all of those issues.

Vote by mail differs from no-excuse absentee voting in that registered voters need not file a request to receive their ballots prior election day, paper ballots are distributed by mail to all registered voters. This system provides voters with more time to researching the candidates and issues and they are able to vote from the comfort of their own home, delivering their completed ballot by mail, dropping it off at a vote center, or by collection box.

Colorado, Oregon, and Washington currently conduct all of their elections by mail. According to a study on the turnout effect of vote by mail elections, Colorado increased participation in the state by about 2-5% and increased participation of those between 18-34 years old by 9%. Denver saw an increase in participation by Latinos. Outside of helping to increase turnout and create greater convenience, vote by mail would address lack election resources and poll workers.

Here in Maryland, the City of Rockville made history when using almost entirely vote by mail system in their 2019 municipal election. Ballots were mailed to more than 38,000 registered voters, who could mail them back or drop them off at a secure ballot box at City Hall or on Election Day. The first use of their vote by mail system nearly doubled voter turnout in compared to their 2015 election.

Vote by mail would help to eliminate many of the burdens that discourage voters from participating in our elections, creating greater accessibility and equity in our elections. SB 408 aim to identify a vote by mail method that would benefit all Marylanders.

We recommend a favorable report.



MDDCAFLCIO_FAV_SB408

Uploaded by: Edwards, Donna

Position: FAV



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**SB 408 - Department of Legislative Services - Voting by Mail - Study
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 20, 2020**

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Good afternoon, Chair Pinsky and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony supporting SB 408 - Department of Legislative Services - Voting by Mail - Study. My name is Donna S. Edwards and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members I offer the following comments.

Unions have supported efforts to institute a Vote by Mail (VBM) system in Maryland for several years. The effect it would have on voter turnout is incredibly positive and undeniable. In 1996, Oregon saw a turnout of 59%, compared with their most recent turnout for a Presidential election in 2016 – after Vote by Mail had been instituted – of 86%¹. Instituting VBM in Maryland would be one of the most effective ways to engage voters and to increase voter participation in our elections.

Opponents of VBM have raised concerns that the system would be expensive, difficult to implement, and would potentially create security issues. While we disagree on all of those points – and can provide ample evidence to the contrary from States that currently use VBM – it would be incredibly helpful to have a definitive study completed by the Department of Legislative Services, as a reference point for future conversations regarding VBM

That study from DLS – that SB 408 requires to be completed by December, 2020 – will delve into every facet of VBM, including fiscal, security, and legal issues, allowing Maryland to design and implement a VBM program that fits our State and eliminates any concerns that opponents may have. We want to ensure secure elections while engaging more voters and increasing voter participation. SB 408 starts us on the path to creating a secure and fiscally responsible VBM program for our State.

We ask for a favorable report on SB 408.

¹ Oregon Secretary of State's Office

SB 408 - Democracy Initiative - Favorable

Uploaded by: kassa, getachew

Position: FAV

350.org * Advancement Project * AFL-CIO * AFSCME * AFT * Alliance for Justice * Alliance for Youth Action * Amalgamated Transit Union * American Family Voices * American Postal Workers Union * A. Philip Randolph Institute * Arab American Institute * AAJC * Bend the Arc * Brennan Center for Justice * CASA * Center for Community Change * Center for Environmental Health * Center for Popular Democracy * Clean Water Action * Common Cause * Communications Workers of America * Corporate Accountability * Daily Kos * DC Vote * Democracy Matters * Democracy Spring * Demos * Fair Elections Center * Food & Water Watch * Free Speech for People * Friends of the Earth * GreenLatinos * Greenpeace USA * Jobs With Justice * Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights * League of Conservation Voters * League of Women Voters * Mi Familia Vota * MoveOn.org * NAACP * NAACP LDF * NAACP National Voter Fund * National Action Network * National Association of Letter Carriers * National Coalition on Black Civic Participation * National LGBTQ Task Force * Natural Resources Defense Council * NEA * New American Leaders Project * Nonprofit Vote * Oil Change International * OUR Revolution * People For the American Way * People's Action Institute * Public Citizen * ReThink Media * Rural Coalition * SEIU * Sierra Club * Small Planet Institute * State Innovation Exchange | SIX * Story of Stuff Project * Take On Wall Street * U.S. PIRG * UnidosUS * Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network * United Auto Workers * US Student Association * Voices for Progress * VoteRiders * Waterkeeper Alliance * Working Families Party



February 20, 2020

Testimony on SB 408

Department of Legislative Services – Voting by Mail – Study Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Member organizations of the Democracy Initiative write to express our strong support for SB 476, which would require the Department of Legislative Services in consultation with the State Board of Elections and Maryland Association of Election Officials to study and make a recommendation on voting by mail.

We are 72 partners from the labor, environment, civil rights and good governance movements representing 45 million members—thousands of whom live in and advocate for issues that impact everyday people in Maryland. Our shared vision for a 21st-century democracy is clear: reduce the power of big money in politics, expand voting rights, and ensure fair representation.

The Democracy Initiative has mobilized and organized members across the country to stand up for a democracy that works for all people, not just corporate or big money interests. Leveling the playing field for civic participation is essential for our members to be able to advocate for the kitchen table issues that matter most—from clean water to criminal justice reforms to a living wage.

Millions of people want a democracy where they can freely participate, cast a vote securely, and know that vote will be counted. Currently, Maryland voters have the option of voting at an early voting center prior to Election Day or by absentee voting. However, there are additional steps the state can take to increase participation and make voting more convenient.

Vote by Mail, sometimes referred to as “vote at home,” builds on the absentee voting process, allowing voters to send in their ballot and in many cases drop it off at a convenient location. Vote by Mail differs from no-excuse absentee in that every registered voter is automatically mailed a paper ballot in the weeks before an election. The marked ballot can be returned in multiple, convenient ways on or before election day by pre-paid postage return, designated drop site or a vote center.

Voting by Mail is an important tool that can dramatically boost turnout by empowering all voters, including senior citizens and people with disabilities who may have a hard time getting to the polls, single parents, students and working people whose schedules make it difficult to stand in line for long, and rural voters who live far from their polling place. Policies that reduce friction in the voting process tend as a rule to increase voter engagement and turnout. According to Vote at Home Institute, states with full vote by mail systems averaged 10% points higher turnout than polling-place centric states in 2018 and there is strong positive engagement among lower propensity voters, who are often younger or people of color.

A growing number of states and jurisdictions conduct their elections either partially or entirely through by-mail ballots. Colorado, Oregon, and Washington operate all Vote-by-Mail elections. According to the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) report, these states were number 2, 4, and 7 respectively in voter turnout in the 2018 election. Additionally, the EAC reports that Vote by Mail was used by 27% of all 118 million votes cast in the 2018 midterm election. There is an increasing trend toward mailed-out ballot use. According to Vote at Home Institute, since 2000, more than a quarter of a billion votes have been cast via ballots delivered directly to the voter.

In Maryland, one municipality has shifted to vote-by-mail for their elections. In 2019, Rockville became the first place in Maryland and on the East Coast to adopt an almost entirely Vote by Mail system. Ballots were mailed to more than 38,000 registered voters, who could mail them back or drop them off at city hall. The Vote by Mail system nearly doubled voter turnout in Rockville elections in 2019 compared to the 2015 election.

Vote by Mail systems drive turnout because they are convenient for voters, eliminate some of the burdens that have historically disenfranchised some voters, and provide ample time for voters to do more research before casting a ballot. Additionally, Vote by Mail is an efficient system from an administrative standpoint and reduces the number of costly polling places operated by election workers. SB 408 aims to identify a Vote by Mail method that would benefit all Marylanders.

The Democracy Initiative strongly urges you to support SB 408.

Crosby_King_FAV_SB408

Uploaded by: King, Crosby

Position: FAV

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.

SB 408 - Vote at Home - Favorable

Uploaded by: kline, audrey

Position: FAV

February 14, 2020

Testimony of Amber F. McReynolds and National Vote at Home Institute in Support of SB 408 Department of Legislative Services - Voting by Mail - Study:

Regarding a Study of Vote by Mail Methods:

1. I am providing this testimony both in my personal capacity - as an expert in the field of election administration - and currently as CEO for the National Vote At Home Institute, a nonprofit nonpartisan organization which is focused on improving the voting experience for voters across the country and implementing convenient voting options to include effective ballot delivery systems (commonly known as ballots by mail) along with in-person voting options.
2. I was qualified as an expert witness in the field of election administration, in the Civil Action No. 17-02016 (RC), U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia (2017) and Gessler v. Johnson, 2011CV6588, Denver District Court (2013). I also provided amicus curiae testimony in the recent Georgia case 1:18 – cv – 04776-LMM Martin, Bowers et al v. Kemp.
3. Until August 15, 2018, I was the Elections Director for the City and County of Denver, Colorado. I administered elections in Denver for 13 years and have worked in public policy and administration for over 16 years. I served as the Director of Elections for the past 7 years, Deputy Director of Elections from 2008 to 2011, and Operations Manager/Coordinator from 2005-2008. Denver has approximately 500,000 registered voters and conducts 2-4 elections each year. The elections include municipal general and municipal run-off, school board, special district, primary, general, presidential. The State of Colorado conducts all federal and state elections by mail ballot.
4. My relevant educational and professional background is as follows:
 - a. Masters of Science – Comparative Politics, London School of Economics & Political Science, 2002
 - b. Bachelor of Arts – Political Science and Speech Communications, University of Illinois, 2001

Professional Certifications:

- a. Certified Elections/Registration Administrator (CERA), Election Center (2010 – Present)
 - b. Certified Colorado Election Official (2007 – Present)
5. In my role as the Director of Elections in Denver, I focused on continual process improvement which includes implementing innovative solutions to improve the voter's experience. During my tenure, the Denver Elections Division earned national awards from the Election Center and the National Association of Counties for Ballot TRACE (a first-in-the-nation ballot tracking, reporting, and communication engine), iAPP (iPad Accessibility Pilot Project), and eSign (a first-in-the-nation Digital Petition and Voter Registration Drive Application). Denver has also been recognized by the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies and received International Electoral Awards for Ballot TRACE and eSign. In addition, the Denver Elections Division has released other innovative solutions including the Denver Votes mobile application, enhanced contextual and behavioral marketing strategies to encourage civic engagement, interactive customer service platforms and implemented a new voting system in 2015.

Rationale for supporting SB 408

SB 408 has my full support, and I recommend it receive yours because I believe strongly in a data-driven and customer service-oriented model of government services. This bill requires a study of vote by mail systems and a report of recommendations specific to the state of Maryland.

We strongly support this bill on the basis that we have already seen enormous growth in vote by mail (VBM) processes nationwide and corresponding growth in participation as well as decreases in cost.

States such as Colorado, Utah, Washington, Oregon and Hawaii are using full VBM systems, with California in the process of transition to full VBM currently. Furthermore, Nevada, Arizona, Montana, New Jersey and the District of Columbia are a step below, with permanent no excuse absentee options. In our opinion, it is not coincidental that many of these states have some of the highest participation rates and continue to grow.

VOTE HOME

But all states are different and while we strongly advocate for full VBM systems, we do acknowledge that every state is different and that what works in one state might not work in another.

We know that mail ballots, coupled with voter service centers, a highly secure and modern registration system including e-pollbooks, and strong voter education efforts can yield major results. We also know that well intentioned reforms mean little when they are not created with and implemented by local elections experts. And so, we applaud the forward thinking to study the effects of VBM in Maryland and how best to approach implementation while increasing convenience, reliability, public awareness, accessibility and security.

We at NVAHI were instrumental in authoring a similar study done by the State of Connecticut and released in 2019 and have been very pleased to see their legislature taking the recommendations seriously and working methodically to pass reforms that work for their state and their voters. You can see that report at: www.voteathome.org/EO-64

Therefore, we urge your support for SB 408 and would be pleased to offer any support that we can in your continued efforts to increase civic participation in Maryland.

DoTheMostGood_Barbara_Noveau_FAV_SB408

Uploaded by: Noveau, Barbara

Position: FAV



Barbara Noveau, Executive Director, DoTheMostGood—Montgomery County

HEARING DATE: February 20, 2020

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

TESTIMONY ON: SB408—Department of Legislative Services—Voting by Mail-Study

POSITION: Favorable

BILL CONTACT: Senator Benjamin F. Kramer

To: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky. Chair, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, and Committee Members

DoTheMostGood—Montgomery County (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 1600 members who live in a wide range of communities from Bethesda near the DC line north to Germantown and beyond, and from Potomac east to Silver Spring and Olney. 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.

SB408 would require the Department of Legislative Services to study and make recommendations by December 1, 2020 regarding the administrative, technological, legal, security, and fiscal requirements to implement voting by mail. The Department would evaluate alternative approaches. DTMG enthusiastically supports enactment of this bill because voting by mail makes it easier for citizens to cast ballots; increases voter turnout; makes elections more secure; and reduces governmental costs in conducting elections, thereby saving the taxpayers money.

Three states have adopted voting by mail—Colorado, Oregon, and Washington. Their approaches differ. Voting by mail in Oregon is the exclusive means of casting votes; there are no polling stations. Colorado and Washington mail ballots to all registered voters, but there are a limited number of polling stations for those who wish to vote in person. In those states, ballots are mailed to residents two-three weeks in advance of the election, giving voters time to learn about the candidates and any referenda on the ballot.

Voting by mail makes voting accessible for more Americans. Accessing traditional polling places isn't always possible, because of work, disability, a lack of transportation, or the hectic lives we live. Many Maryland citizens are not aware that they can request an "absentee" ballot without having to justify an inability to vote in person, also suppressing turnout. To make matters worse,

these impediments to voting in person disproportionately impact communities of color, low wage hourly workers and the elderly.

Colorado, Oregon, and Washington all have higher voter turnouts than Maryland and the national average. In the November 2018 elections, the three states had voter turnouts ranging from 58-61.4% of voters; Maryland percentage was a little over 54% with the national average at approximately 50%. Locally, in November of 2019, the City of Rockville conducted its local elections exclusively by mail. The result was record participation, doubling the number from the previous local election.

Not only is voter turnout increased, but by relying on paper ballots, there are no cybersecurity issues. Moreover, there can be substantial governmental cost savings. Specifically, schools would not need to be closed, and there would be fewer, if any, voting machines to procure, maintain, and store. Counties in Colorado saw costs declines by an average of 40 percent following implementation of voting by mail.

For reasons stated above, DTMG strongly supports SB408 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

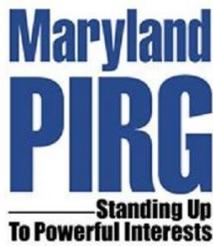
Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Noveau
Executive Director, DoTheMostGood
barbara@dtmg.org
240-338-3048

MDPIRG_RISHISHAH_FAV_SB0408

Uploaded by: SHAH, RISHI

Position: FAV



**SB408: Department of Legislative Services - Voting by Mail - Study
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 20th, 2020
Rishi Shah, Maryland PIRG**

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Maryland PIRG is a state based, non-partisan, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state and a student funded, student directed chapter at the University of Maryland College Park.

We support SB408 to study the requirements necessary to implement a vote by mail system in Maryland. Throughout the nation, vote by mail has increased voter turnout and reduced costs. A study on vote by mail can determine how Maryland can achieve these benefits, apply best practices from other states while ensuring we adapt the policy to meet the unique challenges and needs of the Maryland voting population.

We hope the study group will actively solicit input from the public through a public hearing or public comment and engage good government groups in the process formally and informally as a means to build strong civic engagement and investment in the process and to ensure the program design meets Maryland's needs. We think the bill could be strengthened to clearly lay out a plan for this engagement.

Background

[According to the National Conference of State Legislatures](#), "At least 21 states have provisions allowing certain elections to be conducted entirely by mail. For these elections, all registered voters receive a ballot in the mail. The voter marks the ballot, puts it in a secrecy envelope or sleeve and then into a separate mailing envelope, signs an affidavit on the exterior of the mailing envelope, and returns the package via mail or by dropping it off."¹

States have different practices when it comes to vote by mail. Four states--Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and Hawaii--hold all of their elections by mail. Some states, such as California and Utah, allow counties to opt-in to vote by mail. Other states allow certain elections or jurisdiction to vote by mail.²

Vote by Mail in Maryland

Vote by mail can work in Maryland. Rockville implemented a vote-by-mail program in 2018, and saw

¹ "All-Mail Elections (aka Vote-By-Mail)," 24 October 2019, National Conference of State Legislatures, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/all-mail-elections.aspx>.

² Ibid.

[turnout increase from 6,468 in 2014 to over 7,800.](#)³ However, expanding the system from one city to the entire state will require answers to important questions. States such as Oregon start by providing all-mail elections in certain circumstances, and then gradually expand their program.⁴ A study will ensure that Maryland can adopt the best practices used by counties and states throughout the country and use this information to create a policy that best fits the needs of Marylanders.

Maryland PIRG has a 45-year track record of helping students register and vote. College students, and young people generally, face a couple unique challenges we should ensure we address with the study: how to use vote-by-mail for populations who move frequently, and for those who may have complicated access to mail because of P.O. Boxes on college campuses, or apartment living. **It's important to ensure these populations get their ballot and have options for dropping off ballots in addition to mailing them in.**

Many states have implemented solutions to these types of challenges. For example, [California has a website](#) where voters can register and get e-mail, text, or phone call updates about the status of their ballot.⁵ Alternatively, Colorado mails all registered voters a ballot, but voters can choose to cast a ballot at an in-person vote center during the early voting period or on Election Day.⁶ Determining the correct approach for Maryland will maximize the effectiveness of a vote by mail program.

Successes of Vote by Mail

Voting by mail empirically has reduced costs and increased voter turnout:

- a. When Colorado adopted a vote-by-mail system in 2013, average costs dropped from \$16/ballot in 2008 to \$9.56/ballot in 2014.⁷
- b. A study on Washington showed that implementing a vote-by-mail system increased voter participation rates by two to four percentage points, and the system increased turnout more for lower-participating voters.⁸
- c. Twenty-one counties in Utah adopted vote-by-mail, and a study found this system increased turnout by five to seven percentage points. Lower-participating voters showed the greatest increase in turnout.⁹

Thanks to this committee, Maryland has become a national leader in voting modernization with the introduction of same-day voter registration and automatic voter registration. The next step in this process is a vote by mail system. **We request a favorable report.**

³ "Rockville Becomes Testing Ground For Vote-By-Mail In Maryland Elections," 5 November 2019, NPR, <https://www.npr.org/local/305/2019/11/05/776305499/rockville-becomes-testing-ground-for-vote-by-mail-in-maryland-elections>.

⁴ "All-Mail Elections," *National Conference of State Legislatures*.

⁵ "California," *BallotTrax*, <https://california.ballottrax.net/voter/>

⁶ "All-Mail Elections," *National Conference of State Legislatures*.

⁷ "Colorado Voting Reforms: Early Results," 22 March 2016, *Pew Charitable Trusts*, <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2016/03/colorado-voting-reforms-early-results>

⁸ Gerber, Alan S., Gregory A. Huber, and Seth J. Hill, "Identifying the Effect of All-Mail Elections on Turnout: Staggered Reform in the Evergreen State," June 2013, *Political Science Research and Methods*, 1(1), 91-116.

⁹ Showalter, Amelia, "Utah 2016: Evidence for the positive turnout effects of "Vote At Home" (also known as Vote By Mail) in participating counties," 03 May 2018, *Pantheon Analytics*.

LWVMD_Nancy Soreng_FAV_SB408

Uploaded by: Soreng, Nancy

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SB 408 Department of Legislative Services – Voting by Mail – Study

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents

Date: February 20, 2020

The League of Women Voters believes voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. We also support an election system that is equitable and accessible.

In the year 2000, Oregon became the first state to adopt a full vote by mail program. Since then, Washington and Colorado have also adopted Vote by Mail. Twenty-two other states use vote by mail for special elections or in certain jurisdictions. According to the website of the Secretary of State of Oregon, “Oregon has the most convenient voting system in the country. Since adopting vote-by-mail, Oregon consistently ranks as a national leader in voter turnout.” Oregon voters also receive an official ballot to complete and insert into a security envelope that is placed in the ballot return envelope and signed by the voter. The ballot return envelope can be stamped and mailed or dropped off at any official drop box in Oregon. We note that the Maryland General Assembly is currently considering legislation to authorize pre-payment of return envelopes for absentee ballots, which would overcome one potential difficulty for voters in returning their ballots.

Voting by mail has the potential to make elections more accessible to more voters, but before Maryland decides to go this route, it should be carefully studied. This bill would require a study to make recommendations regarding the administrative, technological, legal, security, and fiscal requirements to implement voting by mail and the return of mail-in ballots by alternate methods.

We also urge that the study consider whether methods of implementing mail-in voting could reduce disparities in turnout, particularly among minority and low-income voters. Although the bill currently requires that the report be provided to the General Assembly before the end of 2020, the presidential election may limit the amount of assistance that the Board of Elections can provide. Allowing additional time could result in a more comprehensive study.

We urge a favorable report on SB 408.

APWU Local 181_Courtney Jenkins_FWA_SB0408

Uploaded by: Jenkins, Courtney

Position: FWA

SB 0408/HB0426

Vote By Mail Study

Courtney L. Jenkins on behalf of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO Baltimore
Francis "Stu" Filbey Area Local #181

Support with Amendments

Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs
SB 0408/HB 0426, Vote By Mail Study
February 20, 2020

Support with amendments

Dear Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee Members,

I am writing in support of SB 0408/HB 0426, The Vote By Mail Study, that would require the Department of Legislative Services in conjunction with the State Board of Elections and Maryland Association of Election Officials to study the requirements of implementation of voting by mail in Maryland.

My name is Courtney Jenkins, mail processing clerk employed by the United States Postal Service working at the Linthicum Incoming Mail Facility in Linthicum, Maryland. I am also the Legislative Director for the Baltimore Francis "Stu" Filbey Area Local #181 (BFSFAL181) of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), AFL-CIO; where I represent approximately 1,700 postal workers serving the greater Baltimore metropolitan area. I support SB0408/HB 0426 because it expands the services the USPS provides and helps us to remain relevant to our customers through participation in their civic duty of voting. While the current presidential administration is looking at ways to privatize our public postal service, voting by mail and studies to implement such would be welcomed by postal workers who are fighting back against efforts to privatize the service. This bill is important because it goes a long way in ensuring the USPS continues to provide vital and necessary services for generations to come. While postal workers are trained and have the expertise of handling political mail, we welcome the opportunity to expand the services we provide by handling election ballots. Often the USPS is rated as the most trusted government agency by the public.

The impact of this bill on communities in Maryland would make voting more secure and accessible to millions of Marylanders who find it difficult to make time to participate in the electoral process. This is especially important for the elderly, young, and those who live at or below the poverty line. Those states with vote by mail have seen an increase in voter turnout and participation during all election cycles from presidential to midterm elections with an average increase in turnout of 10-15%. A study on vote my mail would show how election fairness, security, and safety all increase when voters are able to utilize the mail to vote.

For these reasons I respectfully ask the committee to vote favorably on SB0408/HB0426, Vote By Mail Study, with an amendment to include the study including input and coordination with the organization representing workers who collectively bargain with the United States Postal Service (American Postal Workers Union, National Association of Letter Carriers, National Rural Letter Carriers Association, and National Postal Mail Handlers Union).

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney L. Jenkins