



**NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF THE BLIND**
MARYLAND

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Subject: Support for SB 408 with an amendment

To: Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

From: Members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

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The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland and Disability Rights Maryland request the following amendment:

On line 15 after the word “security” add the word “accessibility.”

Although this is a one-word amendment, it is significant for the success of the bill . The federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and Maryland laws require that voters with disabilities be able to cast their vote privately and independently. Voters that are blind or have other disabilities cannot access paper vote- by-mail ballots. Any study should include an analysis of accessible technology including on-line ballot delivery, marking, and verifying technology.

It is imperative that accessibility be included as a stipulation for the study’s requirements along with convenience, reliability, and security. Including accessibility as a specified parameter of the study may help avoid some of the issues with the current voting process that has led to a segregated voting system. Disabled voters have also raised concerns related to their right to privacy, which has been limited, because of underutilization of the Ballot Marking Devices (BMDs). The Department of Legislative Services, the State Board of Elections and the Maryland Association of Election Officials must study and make recommendations related to accessibility to ensure the rights of Marylanders are upheld.

Please amend SB 408/HB426 as recommended above. Thank you.