



February 24, 2020

**Testimony on HB 816
Real Property- Residential Leases-Voter Registration
Environment and Transportation**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland and ACLU Maryland support HB 816, which would require landlords to provide their tenants with a voter registration application and information pertaining to voter registration. We believe this legislation will expand access to voter registration for those who are renting in the state of Maryland.

According to Census data from 2012, renters only form 28% of the voter population. Renters also tend to be more transient than homeowners: 59% of renters have lived in their current residence for less than 2 years. Long-term residents tend to be the ones who are more likely to feel invested in their area and register to vote. Because renters are so transient, they are significantly less likely to register to vote, or to actually vote.

77% of homeowners vote, compared to only 58% of renters. Residents who move are less likely to vote, in part because of the need to re-register at a new location, the concept of residential mobility, according to the Campaign Finance Board's 2012 report. HB 816 will be helpful in ensuring that all new tenants receive a voter registration form will help increase registration levels, particularly among underrepresented groups like young voters and transient residents

HB 816 dovetails nicely with other voter registration reforms that have made voting more accessible including no Online Voter Registration, Same Day Registration, and Automatic Voter Registration. Like these reforms, HB 816 has the potential to further expand access to the ballot by creating another opportunity for eligible voters to receive information about registering to vote.

Improvements to voter registration access is particularly important in Maryland—in 2016, voter turnout was only 66 percent, which means 1.4 million eligible voters did not participate in the 2016 elections. This was the lowest turnout the state had seen since 1992.¹

Finally, the proposal under HB 816 is a cost-effective way to potentially increase voter turnout. As the fiscal and policy note to the bill states, the measure would not require any financial expenditure by the state or local governments.

We support HB 816 and urge a favorable report.