



Maryland Association of Community Services

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January 29, 2020

House Ways & Means Committee HB 140: Election Law - Petitions and Ballot Questions - Plain Language Requirement

Submitted by **Laura Howell, Executive Director**
Position: Support

The Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS) is a non-profit association of over 100 agencies across Maryland serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). MACS members provide residential, day and supported employment services to thousands of Marylanders, so that they can live, work and fully participate in their communities.

Maryland's Health General Article §7-1004 protects the right of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to participate in the electoral process—a right recognized by the Supreme Court as a fundamental liberty interest. However, when a voter cannot understand their election materials, this right is undermined. The plain language requirement of HB 140 as applied to ballots and petitions is consistent with the principles embodied in Universal Design—a design approach focused on enabling access, understanding and usage to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of age, size, ability or disability.

MACS is in strong support of efforts that effectuate the rights of people with disabilities to vote and respectfully urge a favorable report.