

Support: HB142 Election Law – Voting Order Priority – Individuals Who Need Extra Assistance

Hello Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Corey Johns and I am here to testify in support of House Bill 142. But really, it should be my father sitting here testifying for the bill, but with his physical condition, sitting in a car for an hour, driving to Annapolis and sitting in these chairs or in a wheel chair for hours is not really possible without him suffering extreme pain.

My father used to be a construction worker for Baltimore City, but after an accident on the job he's suffered through chronic pain for the last 30-plus years. He's had in total 16 surgeries, including five on his back, two on his knees – awaiting two more on his knees – and a quadruple bi-pass surgery. He had eight disc fused in his back, with a rod running down his spine and eight screws in his back.

At this point, at age 67, getting out of bed is a challenge for my dad. One days he does feel good enough to go out, he usually pays a price of having to spend the next few days barely able to move laying flat on his mattress.

Last election, my dad went to the Honeygo Community Center for early voting. He waited in line for over an hour. He has a Rollator, one of those walkers with a seat on it, a large padded wheelchair and a smaller wheel chair with a custom made pad for him to sit on, none of them provide him enough comfort to sit for over an hour, mostly outside in the cold as he waited to vote.

Yes, my father has the option to vote absentee and mail in his ballot, but to him, voting live and in person is how he feels most involved. Considering his physical condition, the polling place is likely the only time he could ever even see or shake the hand of his elected officials or talk to them in person about what is important to him. He does not want to lose that. He does not want to feel like he is just going to be forced to stay home and in the shadows and no longer be a valued part of the election process.

HB 142 would help my father, and so many other people in a similar or worse situation than himself remain active and feeling as they are valued members of our political process. Please, help him out and submit a favorable report of HB 142.