

Submitted by: Andy Ellis, Chair Maryland Green Party
On Behalf of: Baltimore City Green Party
In Relation to: **HB 442**

The Baltimore City Green Party is in support of HB 442. We believe this legislation upholds our core values of social justice and grassroots democracy.

West Baltimore has the greatest civil rights legacy of anywhere in America. When it comes to leaders, legislation, and litigation, few other places come close, and none surpass it. Despite this illustrious legacy, or more accurately, in spite of it, there is no Early Voting site in the heart of West Baltimore, an injustice that must swiftly be rectified.

The reasons we are calling for an Early Voting polling site in West Baltimore-- in the Mondawmin area, to be exact-- are manifold and should be glaringly obvious: racial justice and equitable transportation access.

Baltimore City is majority African American, and the area with the highest concentration of Black people is West Baltimore. Whether by design or by oversight, however, our city's Early Voting sites are placed around the perimeter of Baltimore, mostly in areas that do not reflect this demographic reality.

It is an untenable injustice, then, that Black people, who fought so hard for the franchise, living in one of the principal areas where that fight was waged and won, have less access to cast their votes early than many of their fellow Baltimoreans. According to the NAACP, ACLU, Center for American Progress, and Brennan Center for Justice, reducing access to early voting is a common form of suppressing the Black vote. Why then, in traditionally Blue Maryland in deep blue Baltimore, is there no Early Voting site in the heart of Black West Baltimore?

The second crucial reason supporting our call for an Early Voting site in Mondawmin is the unparalleled equitable transportation access the area provides. In a city with far too little investment in public transportation, Mondawmin is a shining exception to the rule of transit apartheid in Baltimore. Our only subway line serves Mondawmin, as well as twelve bus routes, four state designated roads, and areas with exceptional walkability brought together by 5 umbrella community organizations representing 50 neighborhood associations, 2 colleges and universities, 4 high schools, and over 50 churches, synagogues, and mosques.

Due to all the veins of transportation streaming into West Baltimore, people from many parts of our city could just as easily vote here as they could even at sites slightly closer to home. Why then is there no Early Voting site in the heart of transit accessible West Baltimore?

As each of us attempt to answer this troubling question, we must keep in mind that whether by design or by default, the history of voting in America cannot be separated from the history of racial injustice in America; that history is alive and well. What gives us hope, nonetheless, is the truth that Baltimore, notably West Baltimore, will continue to be a leader in the fight for racial justice in America.

We urge a **favorable report on HB 442** and believe that this early voting sight will significantly improve the voting and thus civil rights of people living in West Baltimore and throughout the city