



## **TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

### **HB 487 Election Law - Early Voting Centers - Accessibility by Public Transportation**

**POSITION: Support with Amendment**

**BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents**

**Date: February 11, 2020**

The League of Women Voters was founded on the belief that voter participation is essential to a healthy democracy. We supported the adoption of Early Voting in Maryland and we continue to work for effective use of this additional opportunity for voting.

HB 487 seeks to ensure that Early Voting Centers are convenient to more voters and would add a requirement that they be located near transit stops. Although we support the goal of making the centers more convenient for voters, the bill appears to require that every Early Voting Center in a covered county be located within a quarter mile of a transit stop. While availability of public transit should be a factor for many centers, there may be areas of a county that are not served by the public transportation system but whose voters would be well-served by a center located there. In addition, the other requirements for a facility that is used as an Early Voting Center, including accessibility and sufficient room for all voting equipment as well as lines of voters, may not be easily satisfied for every location within the quarter-mile limit.

We encourage the Committee to amend the bill to provide that access to public transportation be one of the factors considered in choosing the locations for Early Voting Centers in the affected counties. This would allow flexibility to ensure that voters in all parts of a county have convenient access to an Early Voting Center while also promoting locations near public transit wherever practical.