

HB0487
FAVORABLE

I support HB 0487.

As a member of the St. Mary's County Democratic Central Committee, I welcome efforts to make voting more accessible. The addition of early voting as an option for voters was a huge step forward. However, early voting locations in rural counties such as St. Mary's can be difficult to reach. St. Mary's County is over 40 miles from its northern border to its southern, and voters may have to travel as many as 25 miles to get to the lone early voting location in Hollywood, Md. This difficulty is compounded when a voter does not have the ability to drive a personal vehicle.

Voters who don't own a vehicle, or who aren't able to operate a vehicle, may not have the means to hire a ride to vote -- they must rely on public transportation. And fixed-route public transportation systems may not stop near the voting location. This is the case in St. Mary's County, where the St. Mary's Transit System bus routes do not have an identified stop near early voting at the Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department. Although riders may request a special stop or "flag" a bus for pick-up, this is not a reliable or safe method for getting to a voting location situated along a busy highway.

Requiring early voting locations to be within one-quarter mile of a public transit stop means that more low-income, elderly, and disabled people will have the opportunity to vote. I fully support that outcome. Therefore, I urge you to vote in favor of this important bill.

Respectfully,

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