



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 881 Election Law - Voting by Absentee Ballot - Prepaid Postage for Return of Ballots

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents

Date: February 18, 2020

The League of Women Voters believes voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. We also support an election system that is equitable and accessible.

A citizen's right to vote should not be jeopardized by uncertainty about how much postage to affix or lack of access to the correct stamps. Due to the size and weight of ballots used in Maryland, absentee ballot envelopes are often marked "may require additional postage." Indeed, the League has received phone calls from voters who were concerned about how much postage to affix and, not knowing the weight of their ballots, we were unable to assist them.

Although the choice to vote by absentee ballot is voluntary for most voters, for those with limited mobility it may be the only practical way to exercise their right to vote. Similarly, there are voters who may be uncertain of their ability to vote on election day due to long commutes or work-related travel and the use of an absentee ballot may be the most practical way to protect their right to vote. Removing an unnecessary barrier to voting is well worth the small costs that would be incurred through implementation of this bill. Passage of this legislation will be extremely helpful if HB 568/SB 372 Election Law - Correctional Facilities - Voter Registration and Voting is enacted.

We urge a favorable report on HB 881.