



**Testimony for the House Ways and Means Committee
February 18, 2020**

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

FAVORABLE

YANET AMANUEL
PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCATE

AMERICAN CIVIL
LIBERTIES UNION
OF MARYLAND

MAIN OFFICE
& MAILING ADDRESS
3600 CLIPPER MILL ROAD
SUITE 350
BALTIMORE, MD 21211
T/410-889-8555
or 240-274-5295
F/410-366-7838

FIELD OFFICE
6930 CARROLL AVENUE
SUITE 610
TAKOMA PARK, MD 20912
T/240-274-5295

WWW.ACLU-MD.ORG

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS
JOHN HENDERSON
PRESIDENT

DANA VICKERS SHELLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDREW FREEMAN
GENERAL COUNSEL

The ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 881, which provides prepaid postage for the return of absentee ballots.

The vote is the defining act of citizenship. As a democracy, we should encourage all eligible voters to avail themselves of the franchise. And in doing so, we should make the act of voting itself available to all eligible voters. The expansion of absentee ballot voting moves Maryland toward this goal.

Absentee voting has been an important resource for many Marylanders—in November 2012 more than 150,000 people¹ voted via absentee ballot. In 2016, that number rose to 175,374.²

Each election cycle presents a different set of parameters for ballot creation and for the size and weight of the return mail piece. As a result, many voters do not know the correct amount of postage required to return their ballots by mail.³ HB 881 solves this problem by providing the return postage for the voter.

For people incarcerated, struggling to get by, working multiple jobs, and trying to put food on the table for their families, finding time and money to buy postage can decrease these individuals' likelihood to vote.

The ACLU of Maryland supports enabling more people to access the franchise.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland supports HB 881.

¹ https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/index.html

² Id.

³ https://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2018/pb22491/html/cover_006.htm

