

**March 1, 2020****Testimony on HB 1379**  
**Election Law - Multiple Ballots Cast by an Individual - Canvassing**  
**Ways and Means****Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 1379 which will require that at least one legally sufficient ballot be counted in situations, in which, more than one legally sufficient ballot is received from the same individual.

This legislation is just making sure that when a voter attempts to vote absentee and provides two legally sufficient ballots, that one of those votes is still counted. In the instance that a legally sufficient absentee ballot and a provisional ballot are received from an individual, the absentee ballot would be counted, and the provisional ballot would be rejected. Also, in specified circumstances in which multiple legally sufficient provisional ballots are received from an individual, the provisional ballot that has the largest number of contests where the individual is eligible to vote would be counted.

Under current law, a local board of elections must reject both ballots, even when both are legally sufficient. This is clearly an issue because a voter attempting to ensure their vote is counted ends up with no vote at all. A common instance in which a voter may fill out both an absentee ballot and a provisional ballot is when they are unsure their absentee ballot was received in time and so, they still attempt to exercise their vote on election day. It is important we do not try to punish these voters and allow them to exercise their right to vote.

“Absentee voting” in Maryland is intended to eliminate many of the burdens that discourage voters from voting, creating greater accessibility and equity in our elections. Now with “No Excuse” Absentee Voting Marylanders can fit voting into their lives more easily. We should ensure our Mail in Voting system works best for everyone.

Mail-in ballots are essential in making sure that the voices of those who cannot vote in person will still be heard. This simple change has the potential to ensure that more voters understand our current system and are able to conveniently participate in elections. For those reasons Common Cause Maryland supports HB 1379 and encourages a favorable vote.