



Meghana Kotraiah, DoTheMostGood Elections Team

Committee: Finance

Testimony on: SB0158 – Election Law – Time Off for Employee Voting

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 4, 2021

Bill Contact: Senator Susan Lee

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grassroots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that support and uplift all members of its communities. DTMG strongly supports SB0158 because it will bring the “time off” provision of election law into sync with current election practices in Maryland, and knock down barriers to voting, allowing for stronger participation and representation in our government.

SB0158 will ensure that *any* employee, not just an employee with proof of being a registered voter, can take up to 2 hours off from work to vote in an election. This is essential because of one of the most important facets of voting access we have in Maryland: same day voter registration. In Maryland, citizens can register to vote and vote on any early voting day as well as on Election day, which removes a barrier to voting. According to the Maryland State Board of Elections, in the 2020 general election, same-day registration was used by 26,303 Marylanders — 12,728 during early voting and 13,575 on Election Day. This widely utilized feature of our democracy is not acknowledged by the current election law, which still requires that employees must show that they are already a registered voter to get time off from work to vote.

SB0158 would also break down barriers to voting by altering the requirement that the 2 hours off from work be granted for election day only. Early voting was established so that everyone can choose to vote at a time that is most convenient for them, avoiding long lines, and taking family schedules and events, predictions of adverse weather conditions on Election Day, travel, etc, into consideration. Employees should be able to take time off of work to participate in early voting. Making a plan to vote and voting as early as possible are important ways that citizens participate in our democracy.

This bill would ensure that *all* citizens - especially those with demanding or time-sensitive jobs, first time voters, and those who wish to wholeheartedly take part in the electoral process - are all able to vote. The specific clause in the bill that prohibits an employer from discriminating, retaliating, or

taking any form of reprisal against an employee who is absent from work to vote would further expand access to engaging with democracy.

Therefore, for all of the reasons mentioned above, DTMG strongly supports SB0158 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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