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Ways and Means Committee

Education Subcommittee

Finance Resources Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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**Support HB 247**

**Election Law – Accommodations for Voters in Need of Assistance**

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee,

Thank you for your consideration of HB247 as amended by the Ways and Means Committee. This legislation requires that in consultation with local boards the State Board of Elections will develop training materials in the various methods that an election judge may use to accommodate voters in need of assistance at a polling site; including those who are elderly or disabled and have a mobility problem, are assisting an individual with a mobility problem, or are accompanied by a child with a disability.

The legislation is intended to encourage those who would be unable to comfortably wait in long lines to participate fully in the political process. HB247 also requires that polling places post visible notices that special assistance is available if requested and that election judges allow voters for whom it may be extremely difficult or painful to wait in line to request voting priority based on guidelines developed by the Board of Elections.

The National Organization on Disability reports that individuals with disabilities are between 12-20% less likely to vote than those without challenges and are seriously underrepresented at the polls. While vote by mail provides one option, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 requires states to provide the same opportunity for access and independence to all voters and mandates that we must offer voters with disabilities the same opportunity to vote in person as other citizens

A primary obstacle to voting for the disabilities community includes problems with accessibility and long lines according to the Governmental Accountability Office. It is important to note that while a 1-2 hour wait may be an annoying inconvenience to many of us, for someone with a disability or a child with a disability it may be a painful and insurmountable impediment.

I request a favorable report on HB247 to allow all of our citizens to participate fully in the political process.

Sincerely,

Delegate Michele Guyton

- Sadly, those who have the most trouble voting tend to become discouraged and disenfranchised, but may actually need a voice in our political system the most. While discussing this bill, I have been surprised by how many people believe that accessibility is not a real issue at the polls and that those