



Meghana Kotraiah, DoTheMostGood Elections Team

Committee: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB0745 – Election Law – Early Voting Centers - Number Required

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 16, 2021

Bill Contact: Delegate Eric Luedtke

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 and that promote equity across all of our communities. DTMG strongly supports HB0745 because it will ensure that there is an adequate number of early voting centers in every Maryland county -- which is essential to facilitate equal participation in our democracy.

An increasing number of people are early voting. October 26th, 2020 was the highest single day early voting turnout in Maryland history, with more than 161,000 early votes cast. The 2020 early voting turnout set records for good reason: during unprecedented events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, early voting is a way to avoid lines and be prepared for whatever may occur. During the 2020 election, uncertainty with the postal service also contributed to the need for early voting. The Washington Post reported that about half a million mail-in ballots were rejected in the primary election. Although the most severe cost cutting measures at the USPS were suspended before the general election, they nonetheless contributed to uneasiness about using mail-in ballots. Because of these unpredictable occurrences, many turned to early voting.

Early voting is important for a multitude of reasons. It emphasizes preparedness; for example, if a line is too long for a voter to wait in on one day of early voting, they can always come on another day. That is not possible for voting on Election day itself. To quote from a Vox article, "it's not just to guarantee that your vote counts. It's also to help all of your fellow Americans who are busy, have inflexible work schedules, or are late deciders, wafflers, and swing voters... voting early, Perez said, has a smoothing effect — not just for you but for everyone else. If voting is spaced out over days, for example, and everyone goes at different times, then there won't be that crush of ballots or crowds." Voting early also helps protect against threats of

interference, which usually have the most impact on Election Day itself, bringing about a rush to combat misinformation or to vote before the end of day.

HB0745 assures that there are sufficient early voting locations for every county in Maryland, based on population. HB0745 does this by lowering the ratio of voters to early voting centers. Previously, a county with fewer than 125,000 registered voters could have only one early voting center for the entire county. HB0745 reduces the population threshold for one early voting center to 50,000 registered voters.

Creating a lower ration of registered voters to early vote locations is essential, given the increasing proportion of voters who choose to vote early and the merits of early voting. HB0745 will increase voter access to early voting sites, increase voter flexibility, and lower wait times in line in an equitable manner.

For these reasons, DTMG strongly supports HB0745 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Meghana Kotraiah
Co-Lead, DoTheMostGood Elections Team
meghana.kot55@gmail.com
240-342-1856