



January 29, 2021

Chairman Kumar P. Barve
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Barve:

On behalf of EveryDistrict Action Fund, I am proud to provide this written testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB 515 Real Property - Candidates - Access to Apartment Buildings being heard before the House Environment and Transportation Committee today.

EveryDistrict Action Fund is a 501(c)(4) organization focused on advancing voting and elections rights issues in states across the country. In March 2019, we published our *Blue States Report*, which documented how legislatures can advance voting rights reform on pressing issues like increasing early voting, reducing voter waiting times, and expanding access to mail-in voting. We work to make the elections process fairer for more people.

The ability for candidates to communicate with voters is a fundamental and important piece of our electoral process. The election science is clear that door-to-door campaigning has an impact on voter turnout and on the ability of candidates to effectively persuade individuals to support their candidacy. Research has also indicated that the sort of empathetic conversations that candidates have on the doors not only leads to different vote outcomes, but can also reshape how voters think about fundamental and sensitive political issues. Many legislators also find door knocking to be a useful way to learn about the critical issues in their district.

However, this important civic activity is often denied to those who live in apartment buildings. This legislation takes sensible approaches to change that and we encourage the Committee to advance it. The consequences of this imbalance are concerning. Should campaigns and candidates only focus some of their most meaningful and effective time and effort on single family homeowners and dwellers? Or, should they have a clear and legal means of reaching out to all residents?

We know also that, in competitive races in areas with many apartment complexes, campaigns do try to engage in direct voter outreach. They may have volunteers sneak into buildings or make use of a key fob lent by a supporter. The framework that this bill sets forward for creating a mechanism for the candidate to engage directly with voters should help to reduce the pressure for campaigns to take these tactics. We see this as a benefit for building managers

and property owners who seek to maintain a secure environment and further reason to support this legislation.

While I am not able to attend today's hearing, I would be happy to answer any questions that the Chairman or Committee may have regarding our testimony. Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole Hobbs
Executive Director, EveryDistrict Action Fund
Nicole@everydistrict.us