



Maryland Association of Community Services

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Executive Director

January 19, 2021

**House Ways & Means Committee
HB 247: Election Law - Voting Order Priority - Individuals Who Need Extra
Assistance**

**Submitted by Laura Howell, Executive Director
Position: Support**

The Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS) is a non-profit association of over 100 agencies across Maryland serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). MACS members provide residential, day and supported employment services to thousands of Marylanders, so that they can live, work and fully participate in their communities.

Though Maryland statute protects the right of people with IDD to vote, that right can become a hollow promise when long lines and/or the physical layout of a particular polling location presents challenges for a person with a mobility impairment—even when the polling place is otherwise ADA compliant. Similarly, a family member or direct support staff, who may not have a mobility impairment themselves, but who are providing support to someone with mobility challenges who must accompany the family member or staff to the polling place, may face a similar barrier to voting. The accommodations afforded by this bill would help clear the path of these obstacles and ensure participation in the voting process.

The Supreme Court has recognized the right to vote as a fundamental liberty interest and MACS is in strong support of efforts to remove barriers that impede the free exercise of this right.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.