



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

1/22/2021

My dear colleagues and esteemed members of the Ways and Means Committee, I am here to present a rather simple bill, HB211 *Election Law - Early Voting Centers - Days of Operation*, which seeks to extend early voting in Maryland from eight days to ten days.

In the 2020 General Election in Maryland, approximately 940,000 residents voted early in-person¹, setting a record for Maryland's early in-person voting. Since its introduction, early in-person voting has steadily increased in popularity each year. In 2012, the number of early votes cast was approximately 430,000 votes, increasing to approximately 875,000 in 2016, meaning it has more than doubled in popularity in the last eight years.

For some history on early voting in Maryland, in 2007, the Maryland Constitution was amended to enable the General Assembly to authorize early voting, which they subsequently did. Per the legislation enacted by the General Assembly, the state may have up to ten days of early voting, but only eight of those days have been utilized. This legislation simply seeks to increase early voting to the maximum amount allowed, for a multitude of reasons.

First and foremost, voting is the lifeblood of our democracy. It is essential and, as a representative body of the people, we should be doing everything we can to make sure that we have as many people participating as possible. One way we can do that is by expanding the timeframe for early voting.

Eight days for early voting is not enough. Even in the midst of a pandemic where mail-in voting dominated, we still had two hours wait times at precincts. I worked as a poll watcher at the Honeygo Community Center in District 8, and at peak times throughout the week a lengthy wait of up to two hours became the norm. A two hour wait for someone working two jobs, or raising a family, should be a thing of the past. Voting should not require such a time commitment and planning.

¹ Numbers provided by the Maryland State Board of Elections:

As it stands, Maryland lags behind most of the nation on early voting, including by some states that are often viewed as being more restrictive with voting rights. Yet at the same time, some of these states, including Tennessee (15 days of early voting), Indiana (28 days), and Texas (13 days), allow for lengthier periods of early voting.

To put it plainly, expanding early voting to the constitutionally allowed maximum of 10 days will make our voting process more equitable and potentially increase voter turnout while saving our constituents valuable time.

With that, I urge you to pass HB211.