



Barbara Noveau, Executive Director, DoTheMostGood

Committee: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB0153 – Election Law – Elections by Mail

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: January 26, 2021

Bill Contact: Delegate Julian Ivey and Delegate Shaneka Henson

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grassroots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a broad range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda at 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. DTMG strongly supports HB0153 because it will address inequities in voting rights that disproportionately impact our black, brown, low income, and rural citizens all across our state.

HB0153 will require each local board of elections in Maryland to send by non-forwardable mail, a vote-by-mail ballot to each individual who is registered to vote as of the 21st day before the day of each election. It also requires that vote-by-mail ballots will be mailed at a certain time, that the voter must take certain actions to vote a vote-by-mail ballot, and other supporting requirements. The critical need for this cannot be overstated.

By now, vote-by-mail ballots have become common practice. From the City of Rockville to entire states, including Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah, and Washington that conduct all-mail elections, vote-by-mail is gaining strength every year. We had a positive experience in Maryland when vote-by-mail ballots were automatically sent to all registered voters for the 2020 primary election. The about-face for the November election, in which voters had to return an application to receive a vote-by-mail ballot, wait for the ballot to arrive, fill it out and turn it in by specified deadlines, was confusing and a terrible waste of state funds, requiring two massive mailings by boards of election instead of just one. With the postal service under siege, receipt of either the application and the vote-by-ballot or both for the November election was delayed for many voters. In spite of these difficulties, voters were very satisfied with mail-in-ballots. The number of mail-in ballots received this past November was overwhelming. Certainly, the pandemic contributed to many voters choosing to vote by mail, but the simple, time-saving process has garnered tens of thousands of new fans in Maryland, and their voices must be heard.

Finally, HB0153 is a simple and straightforward piece of legislation that can resolve myriad problems while not infringing in any way on other important voting reform measures such as

expanded early voting locations and dates, day-of registration and party affiliation for all elections and, better yet, automatic voter registration.

For the reasons mentioned above, DTMG strongly supports HB0153 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Noveau
Executive Director, DoTheMostGood
barbara@dtmg.org
240-338-3048