

# Maryland PIRG

## Testimony for HB1345

Ways and Means Committee

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Mail-In Voting - Certification of Assistance, Design of Materials, and Ballot Curing

### POSITION: FAVORABLE

*Maryland PIRG is a state based, non-partisan, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state and a student funded, student directed chapter at the University of Maryland College Park. For forty five years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society. That includes a long history of working to help students register and vote.*

We support HB1345 to standardize mail-in ballot materials and create a curing process for mail-in ballots. We're all better off with a democracy where everyone has a voice and is represented, and our voting systems should be easy to use, accurate, and secure.

Maryland PIRG believes that our ballots generally should be designed clearly for voters to ensure ease of use for all eligible voters, and supports legislation to improve our ballot design and instructions. Clear ballot instructions can help increase voter participation by helping ensure votes are not lost due to voter confusion. HB1345 helps address a real problem - North Carolina adopted a similar clear ballot design in 2020 and, due in part to this improvement, [the number of mail-in ballots rejected for incomplete witness information went from 1.4% in 2016 to 0.6% in 2020.](#)

In addition to clear design, a curing process is important to ensure that Marylanders who intend to vote are able to vote. Of all rejected mail-in ballots in Maryland during the general election, [42% of these ballots were rejected because they were not signed by the voter](#), totalling to 1,552 total rejected ballots. During the June primary, [3,290 ballots were rejected because of a lack of signature](#), totalling nearly 5,000 voters throughout 2020. When possible, voters should be alerted to a missed signature and be given the opportunity to fix it.

[18 states already have statutes that require voters to receive notice if there is a missing signature or signature discrepancy on their mail-in ballot](#), and it's time for Maryland to join them. Nobody should lose their voice in our democracy because they forgot to sign a piece of paper.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

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