



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION

Ways & Means Committee

HB 656: Election Law - Early Voting Centers - Accessibility by Public Transportation

February 9, 2021

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is an independent, public policy organization that works to improve policies, programs and services that support people with developmental disabilities and their families in our communities. The DD Council is led by people with developmental disabilities and their families. From that perspective, **the DD Council supports HB 656** which requires, that an early voting site be within 500 feet of fixed route transportation stop.

WHY is this legislation important?

- One of the most cited barriers for people with developmental disabilities in achieving full participation in community life is the availability, accessibility, and reliability of transportation.
- Fixed route transit, when available, makes full participation more possible.
- Voting is a fundamental right that Maryland's citizens with developmental disabilities want and need to participate in.
- All of Maryland's voters must be able to access their fundamental right to vote simply.
- There can be many barriers to voting for a person with a disability, access to the ballot by fixed route transit reduces those barriers significantly.
- Helps ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Help America Vote Act.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- If a County has fixed-route transportation, the County Board must designate early voting sites that are located less than 500 feet from a public transportation station or stop.

The additional access to the ballot afforded by HB 656 is essential so people with developmental disabilities maintain their fundamental right to vote.

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