



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 1345 – MAIL-IN VOTING – CERTIFICATION OF ASSISTANCE, DESIGN OF MATERIALS, AND BALLOT CURING

POSITION: FAVORABLE

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The League of Women Votes of Maryland believes our elections should be fair, accessible, feasible to implement, and increase voter participation. We particularly support voting by mail and have assembled a list of best practices for implementing it. The provisions of HB 1345 include several of these best practices for mail-in voting, with an added focus on designing the ballot materials for greater voter engagement:

- Require **absentee voting materials to be written in plain language** that's easy to understand. This is an essential fix. In the 2020 elections, voters were often confused by the instructions for returning their ballot because some new steps were required. Any changes for voters must be clearly explained.
- **Certification of assistance** (and instructions in other languages, where applicable) will be incorporated in the design of the return envelope rather than appearing on a separate form. This can help voters by reducing the pieces of paper to be handled.
- Official voting-related mailings must have a **consistent appearance**, making them immediately recognizable and less likely to be overlooked or accidentally discarded. Specialists in this type of design have helped other states create attractive materials that are also cost-effective to print and mail.
- The envelope(s) in which the ballot is returned should be designed to **protect the privacy of a voter's signature** and other information. Essential information will still be visible in a barcode that can be read by scanners but not by the canvassers or others who handle the ballots.
- Establishing regulations to facilitate the **timely "curing" of ballots** which arrive with correctable errors such as an unsigned oath. The local Boards of Elections will have multiple options for communicating with voters who've made this inadvertent error that could potentially disenfranchise them.

In the 2020 General Election, half of all ballots cast were by mail. Many Marylanders may choose to use this method in future elections, so it makes sense to enact improvements now.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland, representing 1500 members across the state, urges a favorable report on HB 1345.