



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**

EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION

**Ways & Means Committee
January 19, 2021**

**HB 247: Election Law - Voting Order Priority - Individuals Who Need Extra Assistance
Position: Support**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is a statewide public policy organization that promotes the full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life by eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, empowering people, and promoting innovation. The DD Council is led by people with developmental disabilities and their families. From that perspective, the DD Council supports HB 247.

Voting is a fundamental right that Maryland's citizens with developmental disabilities want and need to participate in. While much has been done to increase access to voting in Maryland; HB 247 is another critical step to ensure all of Maryland's citizens, including people with disabilities, access their fundamental right to vote fairly and independently.

This legislation allows:

- Those with mobility issues and those supporting people with mobility issues, those with a young child, or with a child with disabilities to request or be granted priority in voting lines, the use of ballot marking machines, and ballot scanning.
- Requires the State Board of Elections to create regulations to ensure that Election Judges are appropriately trained.
- Ensures notices are provided to alert eligible voters that they may seek priority status. Additionally, this initiative calls for the collection of data to determine the effectiveness of the priority system and level of participation.

HB 247 is another step in the right direction towards informing and empowering all of the voters of Maryland, including those with developmental disabilities.

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