



**Subject: Opposition to HB1192**

**To: House Ways and Means Committee**

**From: Members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland**

**Contact: Sharon Maneki, Director of Legislation and Advocacy  
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland  
9013 Nelson Way  
Columbia, MD 21045  
Phone: 410-715-9596  
Email: nfbmdsm@gmail.com**

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The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Ways and Means Committee to vote unfavorable on HB1192, a bill requiring the creation of guidelines such as verification of signatures on absentee ballot request forms. If this bill is enacted, it will create additional barriers for voters with disabilities and will be an additional source of discrimination against these voters.

The bill states, “If a voter is unable to provide a signature that matches the signature on the voter’s registration record, the voter shall identify the reason why the provided signature is inconsistent with the signature on record.” This requirement will force the voter to identify his or her disability. This is example of discrimination created in this proposed bill. This requirement is already against state and federal law.

HB1192 offers a solution to a problem that does not exist. If there is a problem of fraud, where are the statistics to demonstrate it? Making the application to request an absentee ballot so difficult will discourage the applicant from voting. HB1192 will be a deterrent to voters.

The bill gives the appearance of helping the voter by offering the opportunity to provide additional identification documents or the opportunity to vote in person. However, in reality, the

bill is creating barriers. If a voter is requesting an absentee ballot, he or she most likely does not have the time or ability to go to the election board with the appropriate documents or to vote in person. These provisions are especially odious for voters with disabilities. Voters with disabilities have transportation difficulties and may not be able to bring the documents to the local board of elections through no fault of their own. This is another example of creating voting barriers rather than solving real problems.

Please vote unfavorable on HB1192 for the reasons listed above. Thank you.