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HOUSE WAYS & MEANS

HB 341 : Election - Absentee Ballot Canvass – Start and Release of Tabulation January 26, 2021 1:30 p.m.

Position: Support

As the designated protection and advocacy organization for Maryland and by authority of the Help America Vote Act, Disability Rights Maryland (DRM), formerly Maryland Disability Law Center, is charged with assisting persons with disabilities to participate fully in the electoral process. Pursuant to this mandate, DRM seeks to ensure election access to a wide range of individuals with disabilities, including, but not limited to, individuals with physical, cognitive, and sensory disabilities.

DRM supports HB 341 which would increase the amount of time local boards of elections have to tabulate absentee ballots. DRM recommends the General Assembly approve this measure that would implement good governance and best practices. Elections officials should be the processing ballots at least seven days before Election Day to allow for sufficient time for voters to cure deficiencies in vote-by-mail ballots. The vote-by-mail process is inaccessible to certain members of the disability community and those that are able to access the process are disproportionately impacted by ballot rejections that could be solved during the cure process. By increasing the amount of time local boards have to process ballots and therefore cure errors disabled voters may participate in the electoral process in a more equitable manner.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

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