

January 26, 2022

Testimony on SB 112
Election Law – False Ballot Drop Boxes – Criminal Penalty
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of SB 112, which would prohibit any individual, organization, or political part from collecting absentee ballots in any container that is not a ballot drop box officially designated by the State Board or a local board of elections.

The importance of the ballot drop box has risen in recent years due to increased strain on the mail-in voting system caused by ongoing concern for public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, Maryland saw a nearly tenfold increase in mail-in ballot requests compared to 2016 – and with new permanent vote-from-home options, that number is only set to increase in subsequent elections. While studies have shown that the expansion of mail-in voting is generally safe, increases voter access (especially for eligible individuals from historically marginalized communities) and reduces the likelihood of adversarial interference,

Official ballot drop boxes are overseen by county elections officials and include multiple security measures such as weatherproofing, padlocked deposit slots, and 24-hour surveillance. They are officially designated by a local board or the State Board for voters to deposit election-related materials safely and securely, ensuring that voter confidence in our election results remains high. SB 112 would make it a crime to collect ballots in unsanctioned, unsecure collection boxes and assess criminal penalties to groups and individuals who seek to deceive voters into depositing ballots into falsely labeled containers.

SB 112 represents an important step towards fostering the sense of security voters need to trust the integrity of our election results. For these reasons, Common Cause Maryland urges a favorable report.