



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Ways and Means Committee

**HB 963: Election Law – Absentee Ballots – Signature Verification and Verification Statements and
Unsigned Ballot Statements**

March 8, 2022

Position: Oppose

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates changes to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. The DD Council is led by people with developmental disabilities and their families. **From that perspective, the DD Council opposes HB 963 due to the disproportionate and negative impact it would have on voters with developmental disabilities.**

WHAT does this legislation do:

- HB 963 requires the verification of a voter's signature on an absentee ballot envelope and establishes a signature verification procedure for absentee ballots and methods by which a voter may have the opportunity to cure an unverified signature on an absentee ballot. If not remedied through this process, it may result in the disqualification of the individual's ballot.

WHY is this a problem?

- It makes voting more difficult and cumbersome.
- It creates barriers for people with developmental disabilities, who are more likely to vote by absentee ballot due to existing voting location accessibility issues.
- It establishes additional and unnecessary layers of bureaucracy that may lead to voter disenfranchisement.

Voting is a fundamental right for all people, including people with developmental disabilities. All voters must be able to effectively access and participate in the electoral process. HB 963 would be a step in the wrong direction. For that reason, the DD Council opposes HB 963.

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