



**HB41-Election Law - Curbside Voting - Establishment –**

**SUPPORT**

Testimony of Maryland Centers for Independent Living

House Ways and Means, January 31, 2023

The seven Centers for Independent Living (CIL) were established by federal law and work to ensure the civil rights and quality services of people with disabilities in Maryland. Centers for Independent Living are nonprofit disability resource and advocacy organizations located throughout Maryland operated by and for people with disabilities. CIL staff and Boards are at least 51% people with disabilities. We are part of a nationwide network providing the following core services: Information and Referral; Advocacy; Peer Support; Independent Living Skills training and Transition Services.

The Maryland Centers for Independent Living support HB41. As members of the cross-disability community, we understand the prominence of having and establishing accessibility measures to improve the quality of life for underserved and underrepresented communities. Access to voting has been one of the main barriers to voter engagement and participation in our community due to architectural, attitudinal barriers and a lack of accessible apparatuses to support our community.

The legislation supports individuals with disabilities who drive, walk with a cane or walker, wheelchair, or other mobility device to have the ability to vote comfortably without undue stress, anxiety and or physical strain and pressure to one person's disability. Voting rights are human rights—and investing in human rights is investing in access for rights for all. We as the cross-disability community should have full access to participate in our rights and abilities to vote in person like other members of society.

Currently, 28 states and Washington DC have adopted Curbside Voting for individuals with disabilities. Our community is vast and varied and require different accommodations, having full access to the voting ballot allows us to express our voice, and our freedom and ability to participate in voting.