



P.O. Box 278  
Riverdale, MD 20738

**Committee:** Ways and Means  
**Testimony on:** HB 616 Election Law – Early Voting – Number of Days  
**Position:** Unfavorable  
**Hearing Date:** February 21, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges an Unfavorable report on HB 616. The bill would decrease the number of days of Early Voting before a primary or general election from 8 days to 5 days.

The Sierra Club and its members care about both the natural and human environments, including ending racial and social injustice. As a grassroots organization, we believe that voting should be as accessible and convenient as possible for all eligible voters, regardless of whether they choose to vote in person at Early Voting Centers or on election day or by mail.

Even though mail-in ballots were easily available in the 2020 Presidential election, nearly a million Maryland voters chose to vote in person during Early Voting. They encountered long lines of people waiting to vote and delays of up to three hours.<sup>1</sup>

To reduce those delays in the future, the General Assembly in the 2021 session passed legislation to increase the number of Early Voting locations (Ch. 43, HB 745) and increase the hours Early Voting Centers are open for voting (Chs. 559 & 560, SB 596 & HB 206). We hope those increases will avoid long lines and delays during Early Voting in the 2024 Presidential election.

Unlike the expansion of Early Voting opportunities enacted in 2021, HB 616 would restrict Early Voting by reducing the number of days from 8 days to 5 days.

Early Voting	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
Current Law	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes					Election Day
HB 616				yes	yes	yes	yes	yes					

451,509 (45.7%) of the 987,029 individuals who participated in [Early Voting in the November 2020 election](#) did so in the first three days that HB 616 would eliminate. Some of those might have been able to vote on another Early Voting day, but others would not have because of work, childcare, or any number of other obligations. HB 616 would eliminate any option for those individuals to vote on Friday or Saturday.

Because HB 616 would reduce opportunities for eligible persons to vote during Early Voting, we urge an Unfavorable report on HB 616.

Rich Norling  
Chair, Voting Rights Committee  
[Rich.Norling@MDSierra.org](mailto:Rich.Norling@MDSierra.org)

Josh Tulkin  
Chapter Director  
[Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org](mailto:Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org)

<sup>1</sup> Wiggins, O., R. Tan, and R. Chason, and E. Cox. [“Citing a history of voter suppression, Black Marylanders turn out to vote in person, Washington Post](#), October 26, 2020.