

Subject: Unfavorable - Oppose HB641 unless it has the Amendments

Date: April 2, 2024

From: National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
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To: Senate Education, Environment, and Energy Committee

This bill deals with curbside voting and no other subject. Members of the EEE Committee have been saying that curbside voting could be used to solve the mail problem and electronic ballot return voting issues for voters with disabilities. An “expert” in the voting study conducted by the House Ways & Means Committee implied that curbside voting will solve the electronic ballot voting return problem for voters with disabilities. These are two separate issues and must be handled differently. In fact, curbside voting is not a feasible solution for voters with print disabilities including blindness and add obstacles, e.g. getting someone to drive a voter to a voting location, having paratransit drop off (can’t wait for a voter), having to pay rideshare, etc. This is not a solution for inaccessible paper ballots, as the people with print disabilities are often the same people who don’t or can’t drive. Please amend HB641 to make it clear that this bill deals with curbside voting and nothing else.

The bill should also be amended to state what happens to the ballot after the person selects their choices on the ballot marking device as it does for paper ballots.

The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland would support this legislation if the amendments are added to it. The bill finally requires voting by the ballot marking device at curbside locations if that is the voters choice. This phrase in the bill will protect blind voters and give them a right to a secret ballot and to privacy which they have in traditional in-person voting.

HB641 should be amended to require that the ballot marking device be brought outside to the voter and specify what happens to the ballot after the voter uses the ballot marking device, as it does for the paper ballot. This amendment is necessary because the bill is incomplete without it: voter rights must be guaranteed. Other

states, such as Texas, have specifically required procedures for the ballot marking device in the bill. The voters of Maryland are entitled to the same protections as voters in other states.

Please place the two amendments on this bill. We do not support the bill without them.