

NICOLE A. WILLIAMS, ESQ.
Legislative District 22
Prince George's County

Judiciary Committee

Chair, Public Safety Subcommittee

Vice Chair, Democratic Caucus

Chair, Prince George's
County House Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

April 2, 2024

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Chair of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
11 Bladen Street, 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 641

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and the members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. I am Delegate Nicole Williams, and I will be testifying in favor of House Bill 641, also known as **Election Law - Curbside Voting**. This bill would ensure that there is one designated curbside voting location in each county during primary and general elections. These designated areas must be determined by the local board at least six months in advance and are subject to approval by the State Board. This would expand access to voting for individuals who have mobility limitations but still wish to vote in person.

To start off, previously, when HB0641 was on the House side, it did not receive serious opposition. However, experiments do not need to be conducted to see that there is a direct disadvantage for disabled individuals to vote in person without access to curbside voting facilities. Additionally, the bill was passed by the House Ways and Means Committee with a unanimous favorable vote. Moreover, the bill passed in the Maryland House of Delegates with a significant majority of favorable votes, 116-20.

There are twenty-seven bi-partisan states, like North Carolina, Virginia, Wisconsin, plus Washington D.C., that already require or allow curbside voting. Each election cycle, some individuals in Maryland are forced to overcome physical hardships in order to exercise their right to vote. Some may decide not to participate at all due to the struggle that in-person voting would cause them. While we do have vote by mail, ballots are not automatically mailed to each voter in the state, so if a voter fails to submit the request form, then they have to physically go vote either during early voting or on election day. During the 2020 election, with the usage of absentee ballots, 62% of people with disabilities or mobility issues voted. Additional methods may increase the number of people with disabilities or mobility issues who vote in future elections. Approximately 11% of people in Maryland (about 655,840 individuals) have a cognitive,

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hearing, vision, or ambulatory disability, which can impact their ability to contribute to the state vote. This number does not include individuals with a temporary disability.

Curbside voting is effective for individuals who are physically unable to go inside to vote. This bill helps people to vote comfortably without unnecessary stressors. This can also assist pregnant persons, elderly individuals, and individuals with life-threatening illnesses who do not see going inside a crowded building or standing in long lines as a safe option for them. Passing this legislation would allow all individuals to exercise their right to vote in person and significantly contribute to the election outcomes. Other states are able to allow this type of voting safely and securely.

These individuals are citizens of Maryland and deserve the right to vote in the manner that they wish. This bill will encourage these individuals to perform their civic duty.

For these reasons, I urge this committee to give a favorable report on House Bill 641.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nicole Williams", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, Esq.