

# **SB 824 - Election Law – Absentee Ballot Applicatio**

Uploaded by: Joanne Antoine

Position: FAV

**February 21, 2024**

**Testimony on SB 824**  
**Election Law – Absentee Ballot Application – Sending to Eligible Voters Before Primary**  
**Elections**  
**Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**Position:** Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 824 which would require that local boards of elections send a mail-in ballot request form to eligible voters who have not opted into the permanent mail-in ballot program. The request form is to be sent at least 60 days before each primary election.

According to the State Board of Elections, about 27% of voters who voted in the 2022 general election chose to vote by mail and almost 640,000 mail-in voting packets were sent to voters. These individuals requested or opted into the permanent mail list since ballots were not automatically mailed to voters like during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the primary method of voting continues to be in person, the number of individuals choosing to vote by mail has significantly increased. Request forms being sent to voters played a role in the boost of those choosing to continue using this method.

The mail-in voting program boosted participation in the previous two elections cycles and is essential for those unable to vote in person. SB 824 would maintain the practice of mailing request forms which will remind voters that they can conveniently and securely participate in our elections while remote.

We urge a favorable report.

## **2-21 NS SBE 824 - Election Law - Absentee Ballot A**

Uploaded by: Nikki Tyree

Position: FWA



## **TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

### **SB 824 - Election Law - Absentee Ballot Application - Sending to Eligible Voters Before Primary Elections**

**POSITION: Favorable with Amendments**

**BY: Linda Kohn, President**

**Date: February 21, 2024**

The League of Women Voters representing members in every district of Maryland supports SB 824 and supports measures to involve every voter in Maryland in an easy and equitable process of voting. LWVMD's position on Voting Rights and Election Administration calls for an election system that is representative, feasible to implement and increases voter participation.

In Maryland, when Rockville used vote-by-mail for the first time in its 2019 Mayoral election, turnout almost doubled from about 16% in 2015 to about 31% in 2019.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, in Maryland's 2020 Primary Election, using VBM for the first time in a statewide contest, voter turnout was about the same as in the 2016 primary election at just over 40%.<sup>2</sup> These statistics show that, at most, vote by mail can greatly increase voter participation, or at least not hurt turnout.

The League knows that vote by mail has advantages; VBM can be helpful for senior citizens or voters living in rural or remote areas who may find it difficult to travel to vote. Vote by mail can also help younger voters who may move out of state, or out of district, and do not have the luxury of returning home for an election.

The State Board of Elections has already put into place procedures and policies around vote by mail this would add in another safeguard to ensuring that as many voters can vote as possible with whatever option works best for them. Many times voters will not always know if they can vote in person either during early voting or on the actual

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<sup>1</sup> Rockville Board of Supervisors of Elections report on November 5, 2019 Election Report, April 6, 2020

<sup>2</sup>Department of Legislative Services, Office of Policy Analysis, "Covid-19 and Voting By Mail," Presentation to the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Committee Ways and Means, June 16, 2020.



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election day. Voters always have the choice of requesting to vote by mail, but SB 824 would take the guess work out of going to the SBE website to request the ballot. It would also continue to educate Maryland voters that voting by mail is a safe option.

The League is very happy with this bill but in light of our support with expanding voter participation we would respectfully ask for an amendment to this bill that would establish SBE sending out a notice instead of an application before the primary *and* general elections.

LWVMD urges a favorable report with the above amendment for SB 824.

# **2024 SB0824 Testimony against 2024-02-21.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: UNF

## Testimony Against SB0824

Please vote against SB0824.

The State Board should only send an absentee ballot application to those who request it. This bill would require sending an absentee ballot application to every person ELIGIBLE to vote. It does not even limit the application mailing to just active, registered voters!

Please vote against SB0824.

Alan Lang  
242 Armstrong Lane  
Pasadena, MD 21122  
410-336-9745  
[Alanlang1@verizon.net](mailto:Alanlang1@verizon.net)