

February 8, 2024

Re: Election Law Curbside Voting Bill (HB0641)

Madam Chair, V. Chair Members of the Ways, and Means Committee:

My name is Monica Wiley, and I respectfully come before you in support of HB 0641- Election Law-Curbside Voting Establishment bill. This bill is very personal. As a voter with a physical disability (I have an incomplete spinal cord injury caused by a drunk driver tractor trailer accident that killed my entire family at the age of nine. As a result—I walk with a cane.) I've experienced immense challenges and barriers to voting due to architectural and attitudinal barriers. In previous election cycles—I've encountered significant voting challenges. I've had to walk long distances to the voting location; the lines are extremely long for me to stand to the point where Election Officers would wait in my place until it was time for me to vote. As a proud confident woman and voter who takes pride in her independence, not only is this embarrassing, it also makes me and others feel a sense of inadequacy as a voter, and it is incredibly taxing on my body physically where my body feels very stressed and exhausted.

As a former resident of Virginia who is now a proud resident of Maryland, voters with disabilities including myself feel very disenfranchised and marginalized due to the lack of accessibility and accommodations to the voting ballot. Not only is it inhumane—it is unacceptable! Currently, 29 states including Virginia and Washington DC have adopted Curbside Voting for individuals with disabilities. Our community is vast and varied and requires accommodations like our neighbors, peers, and other voting members of society.

Full access to voter participation should be available and convenient without experiencing undue stress and pressure to one's respective disability. I'm a working professional who has built her career on equity, inclusion and belonging for my community. Voting is the bedrock of our democracy. It is the freedom, the ability, and the independence to exercise our voice through voting without challenges and barriers. Proper access and accommodations to the voting process is critical and vital to advancing the fairness, parity, and rights of people with disabilities. Having full access to the voting ballot adds value to our autonomy, our voice, our freedom, and ability to participate in voting and our right to exercise the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment-voting rights and voting access for all.

In close, I like to end with a quote by Martin Luther King Jr., "the time is always right to do what is right". That being said, let's pass HB HB0641. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Monica Wiley, Voter Engagement Specialist, National Disability Rights Network