



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

Voting Rights

Voting is a fundamental right. All Marylanders must have the same access to their fundamental right to vote, including people with disabilities.

The following bills for the 2024 legislative session would make voting harder for people with disabilities:

HB 202: Election Law — Absentee Ballots — Signature Requirements and Verification

Requires the verification of a voter's signature on an absentee ballot envelope.

HB 142: Election Law — Polling Places — Establishing Voter Identity (Voter Privacy Act of 2024)

Requires a voter to show government-issued identification that includes a photograph, a voter registration card, and other documents that show the voter's name and address.

Why do these bills create barriers for people with disabilities?

- People with disabilities are more likely to vote by absentee ballot, and twice as likely to not have a government-issued ID.
- There are more requirements for people with disabilities.
- Many people with disabilities do not have a signature that is easy to read; in fact, many must use accommodations such as name stamps.
- The cost to obtain a government-issued ID may be prohibitive for people with disabilities as well as people of color. It is also hard to get the appropriate documentation needed and find transportation.

The following 3 bills for the 2024 legislative session would make in-person voting easier and more accessible for people with disabilities:

HB0641: Election Law — Curbside Voting

Requires that each local board of elections designate an outside location suitable for curbside voting at polling places.

- This bill promotes greater inclusion for people with disabilities.
- With more options for voting, more people with disabilities will be more likely to vote.
- Curbside voting locations must be accessible to public transportation.

**HB1342: Election Law — Ballot Questions — Publication of Proposed Laws
and Plain Language Summary**

Requires state and local boards of elections to write ballot questions and enactments in plain, easy-to-understand, language.

- This bill makes Maryland more inclusive for all voters, including voters with disabilities.
- When ballot questions are written in simple, plain language, a voter does not have to struggle to read the ballot, and therefore the voting process becomes easier and completed quickly.
- Plain language on ballots also makes voting easier for voters, and any supporters helping them, whose first language is not English.

**HB1343/SB0495: Election Law — Petitions and Ballot Questions —
Plain Language Requirement**

Requires that a statement on a petition that seeks to place a question on the ballot, and a statement about the ballot question's purpose, be written in plain language, understandable by persons with up to a 6th-grade level of reading.

- Plain language on a ballot petition will make it easier for everyone, including people with disabilities, to understand what they are being asked to consider.
- This bill encourages the active input of, and feedback from, all voters in shaping the content of ballot questions — rather than being passive bystanders in an election process that would only ask them to answer “yes” or “no.”

*For additional information about the bills highlighted here, please contact:
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