



**Testimony for the House Ways and Means Committee  
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**HB 152 Secure and Accessible Registration Act**

**FAVORABLE**

The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 152, which would establish an automatic voter registration system in Maryland, with proper protections to prevent ineligible voters who may be inadvertently registered from being criminalized.

The vote is the defining act of citizenship. As a democracy, we should encourage all eligible voters to avail themselves of the franchise. Moreover, registering to vote should be easy, and the government should take more responsibility for making it easy. In so doing, we should make the act of registering to vote itself readily accessible to all eligible voters.

In 1993, the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), better known as the “Motor Voter Act,” required all state agencies that offer public assistance to also offer easily accessible voter registration services. HB 152 is the logical next step toward engaging eligible Marylanders in our democratic processes by making it easier to register to vote.

Further, we support the implementation of safeguards against liability for ineligible persons who are accidentally registered to vote or who vote based on accidental registration. Without safeguards, people not qualified to vote—immigrants who have not yet become citizens, for example—could find themselves inadvertently registered. This could subject people to prosecution. It could be an even more serious problem if an individual doesn’t understand that, even though registered, she or he is still not allowed to vote, and then casts a ballot. That could accidentally create the kind of voter “fraud” problem some people warn about but that generally does not exist.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 152.

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