



**Testimony for the House Economic Matters Committee  
January 16, 2018**

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**HB 55 Business Occupations – Obligations of Real Estate Brokers – Voter  
Registration**

**SUPPORT**

The ACLU of Maryland and Common Cause Maryland supports HB 55, which would require certain housing professionals to provide their clients with a voter registration application and information pertaining to voter registration, without exacting any penalty for failure to comply with the provision.

HB 55 dovetails nicely with the efforts already underway pursuant to the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). Under the NVRA, states are required to provide persons with an opportunity to register to vote when they interact with certain state agencies, including departments of transportation and public assistance offices. Like the NVRA, HB 55 has the potential to further expand access to the ballot by creating another opportunity for eligible voters to receive information about registering to vote.

Improvements to voter registration access is particularly important in Maryland— in 2016, voter turnout was only 66 percent, which means 1.4 million eligible voters did not participate in the 2016 elections. This was the lowest turnout the state had seen since 1992.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the proposal under HB 55 is a cost-effective way to potentially increase voter turnout. As the fiscal note to the bill states, the measure would not require any financial expenditure by the state or local governments.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland supports HB 55.

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<sup>1</sup> NBC Washington—First Read – DMV. Maryland Voter Turnout Ended Up Lower Than Projected. Bryan White. Nov. 10, 2016.