



**Testimony for the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Committee
March 1, 2018**

SB 1048 Secure and Accessible Registration Act

FAVORABLE

The ACLU of Maryland supports SB 1048, 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. SB 1048 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 SB 1048.

TONI HOLNESS
PUBLIC POLICY DIRECTOR

AMERICAN CIVIL
LIBERTIES UNION
OF MARYLAND

MAIN OFFICE
& MAILING ADDRESS
3600 CLIPPER MILL ROAD
SUITE 350
BALTIMORE, MD 21211
T/410-889-8555
or 240-274-5295
F/410-366-7838

WWW.ACLU-MD.ORG

COLEMAN BAZELON
PRESIDENT

SUSAN GOERING
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDREW FREEMAN
GENERAL COUNSEL