



February 21, 2013

**Testimony on SB 279 –
Election Law - Improving Access to Voting
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 279, which would expand early voting and allow citizens to register to vote at polling centers. Taken together, these two elements are a critical combination for increasing voter participation in elections.

Early voting is proven and popular – but that measure alone does not guarantee new voters in the process. States that combine same day registration with early voting lead the nation in voter turnout. It is a critical combination.

A healthy democracy requires the participation of all eligible citizens. To enable this, we need to break down barriers to voting that have inhibited greater involvement. Early voting and same-day voter registration are critical steps to ensure that if eligible voters show up at the polls on Election Day, they will be given the opportunity to register and vote.

This past Election Day, we heard from voters across the state that they stood in line for hours only to find they had been kicked off the voter rolls, and there was no option for them to register at the polls to cast a ballot that counts. Allowing voters to register to vote during the election ensures that no eligible voter is turned away.

Common Cause Maryland does support tightening the language around requesting absentee ballots online to ensure that any potential security risk is minimized. It is important to note that we do not support online voting; however, it is our understanding that the ballot marking tool is not a step towards voting online but rather a method to expand absentee voting for those who cannot vote in person due to location or disability. We look forward to working with the Governor's office and the sponsors to make sure this part of the bill is as strong and secure as possible.

Giving eligible Americans more opportunities to register to vote is a good thing for our democracy. Early voting and same day voter registration are a potent combination for increasing voter participation in elections. We urge a favorable report on SB 279.

Common Cause Maryland is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to restoring the core values of American democracy, reinventing an open, honest and accountable government that works in the public interest, and empowering ordinary people to make their voices heard.