

Press Release

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Senators Brater and Jacobs Kick Off Initiative to Make Voting More Accessible, Convenient for Michigan Residents

Senate Bill 12 would add Michigan to list of states allowing absentee voting for all registered voters

FARMINGTON HILLS – Today Sen. Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) and Sen. Gilda Z. Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods) joined with local election officials in Farmington Hills to announce their No Excuses Voting initiative that would make voting convenient and accessible for all Michigan residents. The effort centers on the passage of Senate Bill 12, a plan that would allow everyone of voting age and eligibility to vote by absentee ballot if they choose.

“This is an election year, and with the historic candidates at the top of the ticket, we’re expecting a record turnout this fall,” said Sen. Brater. “Allowing everyone access to absentee voting will make the process more efficient, keep costs down, and eliminate barriers that may prevent busy Michiganders from getting to the voting booth.”

Currently there are limitations on absentee voting. Only voters who are over 60 years old, incarcerated, have religious reasons for not voting on Election Day, plan to be out of their precinct on Election Day, or need assistance at the polls are eligible to vote absentee. There are no provisions for people who are working long days or odd shifts, have young children at home, have transportation issues, become ill or hospitalized, or have trouble getting to the polls for reasons other than those listed on the absentee ballot application.

“Voting is a basic and essential right, and we should be doing all that we can to accommodate every single citizen that wants to exercise that right,” said Sen. Jacobs. “Everybody is directly affected by the officials and the issues that are voted on, and they should in turn be able to be directly involved in the process regardless of their reason or excuse.”

SB 12 would remove limitations, making absentee voting an option for all voters. Voting by mail allows more time to review ballots, make decisions, and vote without interrupting already busy or unpredictable schedules. The bill would also relieve voters of costs associated with voting at a polling station, including high gas prices and lost time.

“As a clerk, I have to deal directly with the disappointment, confusion and frustration

people feel when their right to vote hits a logistical snag,” said Kathy Dornan, Farmington Hills City Clerk. “Allowing people to vote absentee, at their liberty and their convenience, makes the election process as inclusive and accessible as it should be.”

“I’ve always supported No Reason Absentee, as long as we can maintain the integrity of the process,” said Oakland County Clerk and Register of Deeds Ruth Johnson. “My county clerk colleagues and I are constantly looking at everything we can do to meet the voting needs of the people we represent, including electronic tracking of absentee ballots, and these types of safeguards could be applied to any absentee ballot, regardless of the reason behind it.”

Twenty-eight states currently have similar absentee voting legislation. SB 12 is currently being considered by the Michigan Senate Campaign and Election Oversight Committee, and the public is encouraged to contact committee members and urge their action on the bill. Senators Brater and Jacobs will be engaging voter advocates, government and election officials and engaged citizens this summer and fall to encourage the passage and enactment of SB 12 and increase voter access in time for November’s election.

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