

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 141 (Senator Zirkin)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Election Law - Polling Places on College Campuses

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This bill requires a local board of elections to, consistent with specified existing requirements for polling places, designate at least one polling place at each senior institution of higher education in the county that has residential student housing on its campus. "Senior institution of higher education" means an institution of postsecondary education that generally limits enrollment to graduates of secondary schools and awards degrees at the baccalaureate or graduate level.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by approximately \$1,900 in FY 2018, and by \$1,600 each fiscal year thereafter, for each additional polling place designated under the bill. The bill is not expected to have a material fiscal impact on public senior institutions of higher education. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** Local government expenditures increase by approximately \$6,200 in FY 2018, and by \$3,300 each fiscal year thereafter, for each additional polling place designated under the bill. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** As it deems expedient for the convenience of voters, a local board of elections may (1) create and alter the boundaries for precincts in the county; (2) designate the location for polling places in any election district, ward, or precinct in the county; and (3) combine or abolish precincts.

A local board must establish a separate precinct on campus, or within one-half mile of the campus, to specifically serve a public or private institution of higher education if the local board determines that at least 500 students, faculty, and staff who attend or work at the institution are registered voters in the precinct in which the institution is located. A local board is not required to establish a separate precinct if there is already an established precinct within one-half mile of the public or private institution of higher education's campus that serves the voters who attend or work at the institution.

The specified existing requirements for polling places, with which the polling places designated pursuant to the bill must be consistent, include, among other things, that (1) public buildings requested by a local board for a polling place be made available at no charge and (2) for polling places in both public and private buildings, specified electioneering and campaign signs be allowed on the premises.

**State Expenditures:** General fund expenditures increase by approximately \$1,900 in fiscal 2018, and by \$1,600 each fiscal year thereafter, for each additional polling place designated under the bill. This estimate reflects an approximate average cost for a polling place designated on a college or university campus and accounts for voting system costs that the State shares with counties pursuant to Chapter 564 of 2001. Costs could vary depending on the expected volume of voters for a given polling place.

There appear to be approximately 25 public and private colleges and universities that the bill would apply to, but polling places are already located on at least some campuses. The Prince George's County Board of Elections, for example, has already designated two polling places at the University of Maryland, College Park and one at Bowie State University. Conversely, the Baltimore City Board of Elections expects to need to establish a polling place on each of six campuses (Coppin State University, Morgan State University, Johns Hopkins University, Loyola University of Maryland, Maryland Institute College of Art, and Notre Dame of Maryland University) pursuant to the bill. Currently, there are polling places within one-half mile of those campuses but not on the campuses.

**Local Expenditures:** Local government expenditures increase by approximately \$6,200 in fiscal 2018, and by \$3,300 each fiscal year thereafter, for each additional polling place designated under the bill. As mentioned above, this represents an approximate average cost per polling place. It includes the local board of elections' share of voting system costs and costs for election judges, E-poll books, and rent. Costs could vary for different jurisdictions, based at least in part on the expected volume of voters for a given polling place.

## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections; Baltimore City; Prince George's, Washington, and Worcester counties; University System of Maryland; Morgan State University; Maryland Independent College and University Association; Maryland Higher Education Commission; Department of Legislative Services

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