

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 591 (Senator Bates, *et al.*)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Elections - Absentee Ballot Application - Required Information

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This bill requires that the absentee ballot application approved by the State Board of Elections (SBE) require the applicant to provide one of the following: (1) the last four digits of the applicant's Social Security number; (2) the applicant's Maryland driver's license number; or (3) the applicant's Maryland identification card number. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2018.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill is not expected to materially affect State finances.

**Local Effect:** The bill is not expected to materially affect local government finances.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** A voter may request an absentee ballot by completing and submitting:

- the SBE-approved absentee ballot application;
- a form provided under federal law;
- a written request that includes (1) the voter's name, residence address, and signature, and (2) the address to which the ballot is to be mailed, if different from the residence address; or
- the accessible online absentee ballot application provided by SBE.

SBE's online absentee ballot application must require the applicant to provide (1) a Maryland driver's license number or a Maryland identification card number, the last four digits of the applicant's Social Security number, and other information identified by SBE that is not generally available to the public but is readily available to the applicant or (2) if the applicant is an absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter as defined under the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act and does not have a Maryland driver's license or Maryland identification card, a Social Security number.

**Background:** A 2017 audit of SBE by the Office of Legislative Audits (OLA) raised concern about certain methods of requesting an absentee ballot that only required limited, publicly available, identifying information (name, date of birth, and address) from an individual. OLA indicated that this created a risk that an individual or group could submit fraudulent absentee ballots and/or could cause legitimate voters to have to vote by provisional ballot on Election Day (and cause those voters' provisional ballots to be invalidated because an absentee ballot also had been cast).

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections; Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Queen Anne's counties; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 13, 2018  
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