HOUSE BILL 1343

G1 HB 140/20 – W&M CF SB 495

By: Delegate Attar

Introduced and read first time: February 9, 2024

Assigned to: Ways and Means

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2

Election Law - Petitions and Ballot Questions - Plain Language Requirement

- 3 FOR the purpose of requiring that a certain statement included on the signature page of a
- 4 petition seeking to place a question on the ballot and a certain statement about the
- 5 purpose of a question on the ballot be written in plain language reasonably calculated
- 6 to be understood by an individual who has attained not higher than a certain level
- of reading comprehension; and generally relating to petitions and ballot questions.
- 8 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
- 9 Article Election Law
- 10 Section 6–103(b), 6–201(c), and 7–103(b) and (c)
- 11 Annotated Code of Maryland
- 12 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)
- 13 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
- 14 Article Election Law
- 15 Section 6–201(a) and (d)
- 16 Annotated Code of Maryland
- 17 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)
- 18 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
- 19 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

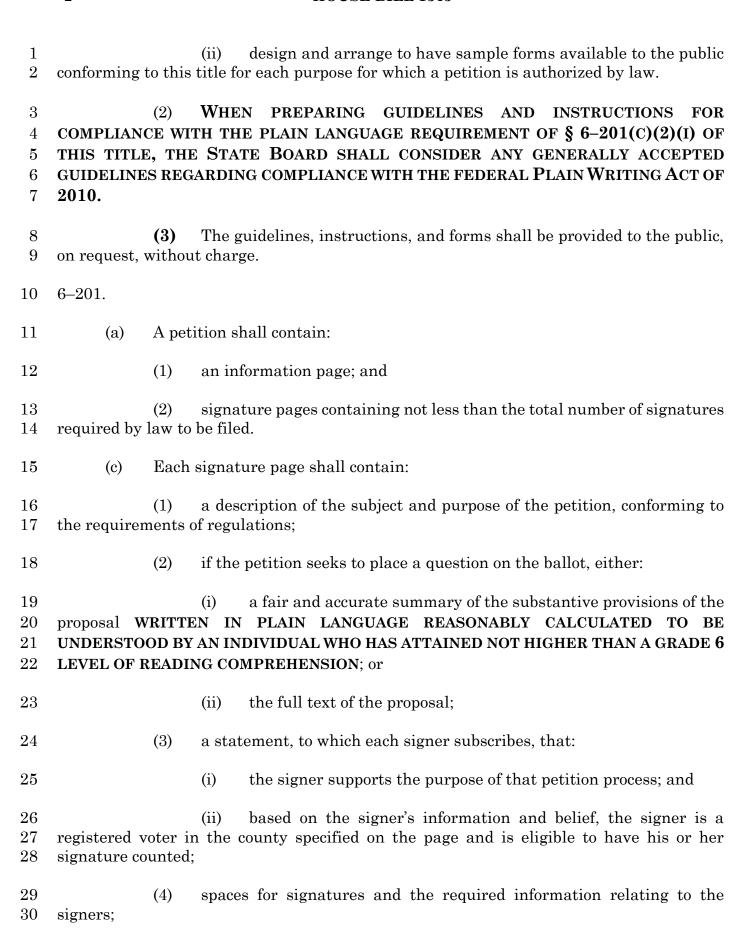
20 Article – Election Law

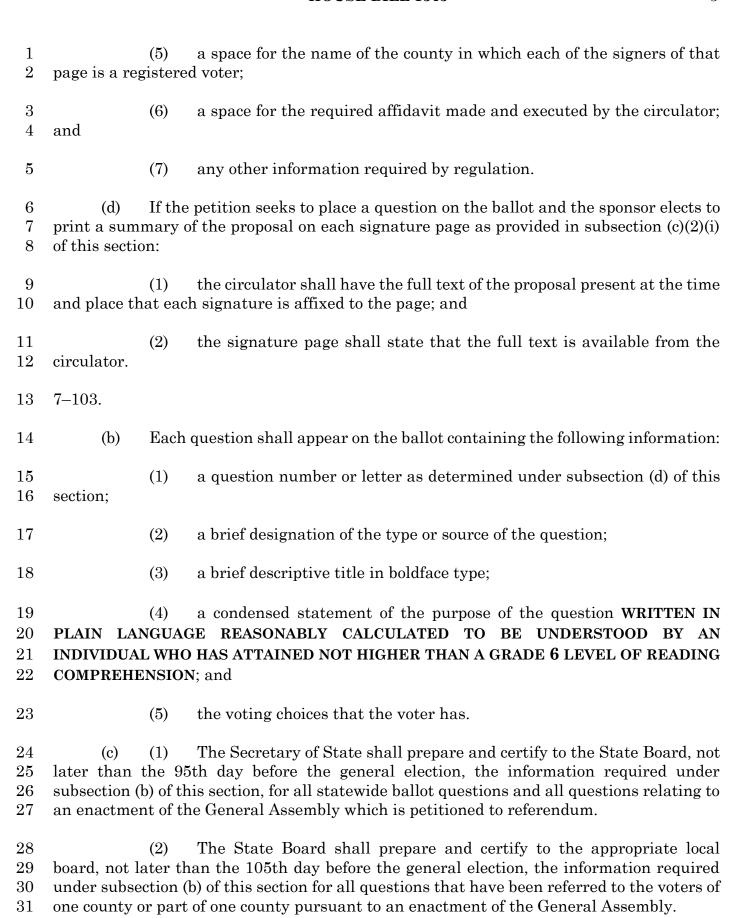
- 21 6–103.
- (b) (1) The State Board shall:
- 23 (i) prepare guidelines and instructions relating to the petition
- 24 process; and

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.







- 1 (3) (i) The county attorney of the appropriate county shall prepare and 2 certify to the State Board, not later than the 95th day before the general election, the 3 information required under subsection (b) of this section for each question to be voted on in 4 a single county or part of a county, except a question covered by paragraph (1) or paragraph 5 (2) of this subsection.
- 6 (ii) If the information required under subsection (b) of this section 7 has not been timely certified under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, the clerk of the 8 circuit court for the jurisdiction shall prepare and certify that information to the State 9 Board not later than the first Friday in August.
- 10 (4) (i) The municipal attorney of the appropriate municipal corporation 11 shall prepare and certify to the State Board, not later than the 95th day before the general 12 election, the information required under subsection (b) of this section for each question to 13 be voted on in the municipal corporation, except a question covered by paragraphs (1) 14 through (3) of this subsection.
- 15 (ii) If the information required under subsection (b) of this section 16 has not been timely certified under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, the clerk of the 17 circuit court for the county in which the municipal corporation is located shall prepare and 18 certify that information to the State Board not later than the first Friday in August.
- 19 (5) AN ENTITY THAT IS REQUIRED TO PREPARE AND CERTIFY A 20 QUESTION MAY USE ANY GENERALLY ACCEPTED GUIDELINES REGARDING 21 COMPLIANCE WITH THE FEDERAL PLAIN WRITING ACT OF 2010 IN DETERMINING 22 WHETHER THE QUESTION IS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE PLAIN LANGUAGE 23 REQUIREMENTS OF SUBSECTION (B)(4) OF THIS SECTION.
- 24 **(6)** The information required under subsection (b) of this section for a question that is being placed on the ballot by petition may be prepared before the petition is certified under § 6–208 of this article.
- SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect January 1, 2025.