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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Unemployment Insurance - Benefits - Election Judges (SB460)

Senate Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee: March 5, 2024, 1:00pm

There is a critical shortage of election judges in Maryland. In the last general election, Frederick County lacked 100 election judges, Anne Arundel County was short by 300, and Baltimore City and Prince George's County each needed as many as 1,000.¹ In 2020, the State had a total of more than **14,000** election judge vacancies.²

There is a significant segment of the population that may be available to serve as election judges throughout election season, even during the Early Voting period: unemployed Marylanders. Unfortunately, Maryland law currently dictates that individuals earning Unemployment Insurance (UI) may lose access to those benefits if they earn the additional money election judges receive. In Maryland, judges are paid at least \$250 per Election Day (including Early Voting).

Six states (CO, MN, NC, NE, NJ, and NY) have passed laws exempting election judge payments from unemployment. Maryland has already exempted jury duty payment from UI benefits calculation.

[SB460](#) would broaden the potential pool of election judges by preventing their short-term earnings from counting against their long-term unemployment benefits. SB460 would also increase the level of civic engagement among unemployed Marylanders.

The MD Department of Labor supports this bill with a minor technical amendment that it will submit soon.

I urge a favorable report on SB460.

¹ WBALTV11. "Maryland Boards of Elections Again Face Poll Worker Shortage." Hearst Television Inc., October 18, 2022.

<https://www.wbaltv.com/article/maryland-election-judge-openings-poll-worker-shortage/41694906>;

Wu, Daniel. "Amid Staff Shortages, Covid, Officials Struggle to Run Md. Primaries." Washington Post, July 17, 2022.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/07/17/challenges-maryland-primary-election-covid/>.

² Murillo, Mike. "Maryland Faces 'Emergency' Staffing Shortage, Needs Nearly 14K Election Judges, for November's General Election." WTOP News, July 24, 2020.

<https://wtop.com/maryland/2020/07/maryland-faces-emergency-staffing-shortage-for-novembers-general-election>