

SB460 - PJC - Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: David Rodwin

Position: FAV



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SB460: Unemployment Insurance – Benefits – Election Judges

Hearing before the Senate Finance Committee, March 5, 2024

Position: FAVORABLE

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Workplace Justice Project works to expand and enforce the right of low-wage workers to receive an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. **The PJC supports SB460, which will ensure that unemployed Marylanders can serve as election judges without jeopardizing the unemployment insurance benefits they are eligible for.**

The problem: Maryland's unemployment insurance law does not exclude election judge stipends from the definition of "wages." Under Maryland's current law, an unemployed Marylander who receives unemployment insurance benefits can receive just \$50/week in wages before their benefits are reduced or terminated. Moreover, the law allows the Maryland Department of Labor (MDOL) to deny unemployment benefits for a Marylander's services as an election judge. This acts as a disincentive for Marylanders to serve as election judges.

The solution: exclude election judge stipends from "wages" and prevent MDOL from terminating the benefits of someone whose unavailability to do other work arises from service as an election judge. Maryland should follow the lead of states such as Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Jersey, and New York that have exempted election judge payments from being counted against eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits.

For the foregoing reasons, the PJC **SUPPORTS SB460** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report. Should you have any questions, please call David Rodwin at 410-625-9409 ext. 249.

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Uploaded by: John Michael Gudger

Position: FAV



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

March 5, 2024

Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

SB460 - Support

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Finance Committee Members,

The Maryland Association of Election Officials strongly supports Senate Bill 460 - Unemployment Insurance - Benefits - Election Judges, a pivotal measure to empower individuals on unemployment benefits to serve as election judges. This role is essential for the integrity and efficiency of our elections, yet recruiting adequate numbers has been a consistent challenge.

One notable hurdle is the reluctance among those receiving unemployment benefits to participate due to concerns over losing their financial support. Senate Bill 460 and its crossfile, House Bill 261, address this by exempting election judge compensation from being considered as "wages" for unemployment insurance purposes. This crucial adjustment ensures that individuals can contribute to our democracy without risking their benefits.

The implementation of Senate Bill 460 is expected to significantly increase the pool of potential election judges. This is vital for the smooth functioning of our polling sites, reducing wait times, and ensuring a positive voting experience. A more robust participation in election administration will also strengthen our electoral system by facilitating wider and more inclusive community involvement.

MAEO urges support for Senate Bill 460, recognizing its potential to enhance civic participation among Maryland's unemployed population and its overall positive impact on our democratic processes.

Sincerely,
John Michael Gudger
johnmichael.gudger@maryland.gov
Chair, MAEO Legislative Committee

03.04 - SB 460 - Unemployment Insurance - Benefit

Uploaded by: Lonia Muckle

Position: FAV



SB 460- Unemployment Insurance - Benefits - Election Judges
Finance Committee
March 05, 2024
SUPPORT

Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Klausmeier and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 460. This bill will ensure that Marylanders that serve as election judges do not lose their Unemployment Insurance System (UI) benefits.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

Election judges are essential volunteers that ensure order and help voters at polling stations. They help sign in registered voters, explaining voting procedure and use of voting equipment, provide ballots, and monitor the conduct of the election. They are given a small stipend for their work, but that stipend is more than the \$50 in additional weekly wages allowed for UI recipients.

UI is a social safety net for workers who are temporarily unemployed through no fault of their own. Its purpose is to provide individuals with the ability to survive while they look for employment. The stipend received from being an election judge is temporary and range from \$100 to \$250. The temporary payment and the amount of the stipend do not have enough to impact for individuals to risk losing their UI benefits. However, the election judge stipend could insert more money into the household and give a temporary financial boost.

SB 460 would allow for people who are currently unemployed and receiving UI benefits to contribute to our states elections without the fear of losing their financial stability. Being an election judge is a civic duty similar to jury duty. There are current protections for jurors and there should be similar protection for election judges.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 460.

Kagan SB460 Testimony 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

CHERYL C. KAGAN
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee

Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee
Joint Committee on Federal Relations



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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>

Letter of Support - SB 460 (2024).docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Alexis Braun

Position: FWA

Senate Bill 460

Date: March 5, 2024
Committee: Senate Finance Committee
Bill Title: Unemployment Insurance - Benefits - Election Judges
Re: **Letter of Support (with amendment)**

States across the country have struggled to find enough election judges to fully staff polls during elections. Senate Bill 460 (“S.B. 460” or “the Bill”) would amend the Labor and Employment Title, Section 8-101 to exclude “any payment to an individual as compensation for serving as an election judge for a local board of elections in the State” from the definition of “wages.”

The Division of Unemployment Insurance (“the Division”) anticipates that any increase in expenditures (from paying more in benefits to UI claimants who serve as election judges rather than deducting this pay from a claimant’s weekly benefit amount as would be currently required) is likely to be insubstantial given the number of claimants who will likely fall into this category.

However, the Division agrees that S.B. 460 would encourage Marylanders to serve their community and complete a valuable public service while earning some compensation during a period of unemployment and that this concern outweighs any de minimis increase to expenditures anticipated by the Division.

While the Department supports the intent of S.B. 460, the agency recently received a conformity opinion from the United States Department of Labor. The conformity opinion states that the Bill creates a possibility of a conformity issue with federal law and requested that changes be made to S.B. 460 to avoid the conformity issue. The Department has provided information to the sponsors of the Bill to propose a change that the agency believes would avoid the conformity issue.

To that end, the Maryland Department of Labor asks for a Favorable report from the Committee on S.B. 460 with an amendment to address the conformity issue.