



House Bill 585

Protecting Election Officials Act of 2024

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judiciary Committee

Date: February 6, 2024

From: Sarah Sample and Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 585. This bill would protect and defend the staff who manage and conduct elections, by making it a misdemeanor to threaten election officials or their immediate family members.

Counties facilitate federal, state, and local elections for all communities across Maryland. Local election officials, board members, employees, and judges are indispensable to this process. Threats and intimidating behavior toward these officials can have devastating consequences for the integrity and efficiency of this critical practice.

Counties believe the provisions of HB 585 will allow for corrective actions to be taken to mitigate these concerning and persistent behaviors. Local jurisdictions rely on enthusiastic election workers and facilitators to step into these vital roles, but unregulated threats and divisive actions will continue to discourage good, qualified candidates from facilitating elections. Additionally, residents will be deterred from engaging in elections if they don't feel safe at a local polling location.

Adopting necessary protections specific to these local officials will allow local governments to continue carrying out fair, safe, and accessible elections across Maryland. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 585.