



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

January 25, 2024

Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
Maryland House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

HB202 – Information

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and Committee Members:

My name is John Michael Gudger, chair of the Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) Legislative Committee. I am writing on behalf of MAEO to provide you with information regarding Election Law - Absentee Ballots - Signature Requirements and Verification.

The Local Boards of Elections do not engage in any form of signature verification, and consequently, we do not utilize the services of handwriting experts. While some larger county boards possess machines capable of performing signature verification, numerous middle and small-sized counties lack the volume of mail-in ballots to justify such a procurement. Additionally, many of these smaller boards face spatial constraints, making it impractical to accommodate such machines.

HB202 also lacks provisions for curing the ballot in cases where signatures are dissimilar. This omission raises concerns that a voter, whose signature may have changed for any reason, would not have the opportunity to clarify the discrepancy in their signature.

The bill is also presented as emergency legislation, prompting MAEO to express reservations. MAEO contends that any significant alteration with potential impacts on us during an election year should be either opposed or modified to come into effect after the imminent 2024 elections.

Sincerely,

John Michael Gudger
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Chair, MAEO Legislative Committee

www.maeo.net