



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

HB14 – 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 and propose an amendment regarding House Bill 14, currently under consideration.

House Bill 14 introduces proposed changes to reporting felony convictions. The bill suggests that clerks of the circuit court and administrative clerks should report the names and addresses of individuals convicted of a felony and currently serving a court-ordered sentence of imprisonment.

We acknowledge the importance of reporting felony convictions for maintaining the integrity of the electoral process. While we appreciate the proposed changes to reporting felony convictions, we would like to draw attention to a significant challenge faced in our current procedure for reactivating former felons. The existing process does not enable us to thoroughly check whether their sentence is complete before approving reactivation. In light of this, we recommend including the date on which individuals become eligible to vote after serving their sentences. This addition would provide Local Boards of Elections with valuable information to determine the precise moment when a felon is eligible to participate in the electoral process.

Furthermore, the proposed changes to early voting center requirements, are noteworthy. The bill specifies that the public official responsible for a public building requested for an early voting center should make the building available in accordance with the law. This provision empowers Local Boards of Elections to requisition public buildings for the sake of democracy.

The empowerment of Local Boards of Elections to requisition public buildings not only enhances the strategic placement of voting centers but also provides a practical means for collaborative decision-making with public officials. This collaborative approach ensures that, in challenging situations, there is a constructive process to secure suitable locations for early voting centers. It promotes a flexible framework, allowing us to navigate potential obstacles and optimize the accessibility of the electoral process.

In conclusion, the Maryland Association of Election Officials presents this informational testimony to highlight the key aspects of House Bill 14. We appreciate the positive intent behind the bill, and we recommend including the date of eligibility for voting in the reporting of felony convictions. Additionally, the empowerment of Local Boards of Elections to requisition public buildings can further enhance the fairness and effectiveness of Maryland's electoral system.

Thank you for considering this information as part of your deliberations on House Bill 14.

Sincerely,

John Michael Gudger
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Chair, MAEO Legislative Committee