



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 13, 2024

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

HB641 - Information Only

Dear Chair Atterbary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) appreciates the opportunity to present information regarding House Bill 641 – Election Law – Curbside Voting. As dedicated public servants, election officials are committed to ensuring that our polling places are as accessible as possible to all voters, in line with our sworn duties and the democratic values we uphold.

Incorporation of Curbside Voting in Future Polling Place Plans

The introduction of curbside voting necessitates the adoption of new criteria for selecting polling locations, specifically the ability of a site to accommodate this form of voting. This change represents a significant shift in our planning and operational strategies, requiring a thorough reevaluation of potential polling sites for future elections. Examples of the new criteria that the implementation of curbside voting would introduce include ensuring adequate space for a line of cars and adjusting the placement of the 100 ft "No electioneering zone" to encompass the designated curbside parking area.

Concerns Regarding Technology Compatibility

A significant challenge we face is the current lack of compatible technology to efficiently offer curbside voting. Our existing ballot marking devices (BMDs) and pollbook printers, although uniform in brand across the state, are not designed for outdoor or mobile use. Unlike the sleeker, newer designs employed in other states that facilitate curbside voting, our equipment is not conducive to this voting method without substantial logistical adjustments and potential additional investments in new technology.

Election Security and Ballot Integrity

The prospect of managing loose ballots outside our established zone of control presents a critical concern from an election security standpoint. Maintaining the integrity and secrecy of each vote is paramount, and the transition to curbside voting introduces new vulnerabilities that must be meticulously addressed to prevent any compromise in our electoral process.

Weather Considerations

The variability of weather, particularly during primary and general election seasons, poses an additional operational challenge to curbside voting. Ensuring the safety and comfort of voters and election workers, as well as protecting voting equipment from adverse weather conditions, requires careful planning and resources.

Recommendation for a Pilot Program or Study

We appreciate that House Bill 641 is not designated as an emergency bill, allowing for a more measured approach to its implementation. Given the various concerns and the significant shift in election administration that curbside voting represents, MAEO recommends the initiation of a pilot program or a comprehensive study before statewide implementation. This approach would allow us to assess the strengths and weaknesses of curbside voting in Maryland's unique context, develop best standard practices, and ensure that any transition to this voting method is conducted securely, efficiently, and inclusively.

In conclusion, while we support efforts to enhance voter accessibility, it is imperative that we proceed with caution to safeguard the integrity of our electoral process. A pilot program or study would provide the necessary insights and guidance to move forward responsibly with the introduction of curbside voting. Thank you for considering our informational only testimony on this important matter. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out.

Sincerely,
John Michael Gudger
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Chair, MAEO Legislative Committee