



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 18, 2025

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

HB839 - Information

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) is the professional membership organization representing local election officials and Election Boards across all 24 jurisdictions in Maryland. Our members are committed to ensuring the smooth and effective administration of elections and to making Maryland elections accessible, secure, and fair. MAEO appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 890, which would allow voters to change their political party affiliation at an early voting center or precinct polling place during a primary election and vote the ballot for their new political party.

Currently, Maryland election law requires that party affiliation changes be made before the close of voter registration prior to an election. Once registration closes, a voter's party affiliation cannot be changed until after the election. This deadline exists to ensure orderly election administration. HB 890, however, would effectively nullify this deadline by allowing voters to switch party affiliation at the polling place and immediately vote in their new party's primary.

While MAEO supports initiatives that promote voter participation, this bill presents considerable logistical and administrative challenges for local election officials. LBEs already spend significant time after elections processing retroactive party changes from voters who submitted updates after the deadline. Allowing in-person, same-day party changes would add another layer of complexity and create a substantial burden on election workers during early voting and Election Day.

HB 890 also raises concerns about ballot management. Election officials determine the number of partisan ballots to print based on voter registration data at the close of registration. If voters are allowed to switch parties on-site, election officials will have no reliable way to predict the necessary ballot allocation, potentially leading to ballot shortages or excess waste.

Additionally, the current voting system infrastructure does not support same-day party changes at polling places. Our electronic poll book software and voting system backend are not designed to process real-time party affiliation updates and immediately issue the correct ballot. Implementing this change would require significant technological updates and training, further straining election resources.

Processing same-day party changes at polling places would also extend check-in times, increase the likelihood of errors, and create operational inefficiencies. These delays could frustrate voters and put added pressure on election judges who are already managing complex election procedures.

MAEO is committed to ensuring fair, efficient, and accessible elections. While we appreciate efforts to expand voter participation, we urge the General Assembly to consider the administrative feasibility and unintended consequences of HB 890. We welcome discussions on alternative solutions that balance accessibility with the integrity and smooth administration of Maryland's elections.