



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

March 21, 2025

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

SB308 - Support

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

The Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony – with suggested edits – in support of Senate Bill 308. Currently, local boards of elections (LBEs) appoint chief judges from the majority and principal minority political parties at each polling place, with flexibility when there are extenuating circumstances. Sometimes, it is necessary to appoint chief judges who are registered unaffiliated or with a third-party so that timely appointments cannot be made. This bill better aligns the law with current practices in designating chief election judges, while also addressing the operational realities faced by the LBEs .

Even though our judges are required to be nonpartisan during all election activities, across Maryland, LBEs strive to designate chief judges from different parties whenever possible, recognizing the importance of bipartisan oversight in maintaining voter confidence. They also work to maintain party balance among election judges, demonstrating a commitment to transparent and equitable elections. However, recruitment challenges and the need for balanced party representation—especially in areas with fewer available election judges—have required practical adaptations.

MAEO supports the inclusion of the "to the extent practicable" language in this bill, which provides local election officials with the necessary flexibility to recruit qualified individuals, including unaffiliated and third-party voters, for chief judge roles. This ensures that capable individuals are not excluded from leadership positions solely due to party affiliation.

MAEO remains committed to fair and accessible elections. We appreciate the General Assembly's focus on the needs of local election officials and look forward to ongoing discussions on implementing this bill effectively while upholding election integrity.