



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 18, 2026

Delegate Melissa Wells, Chair
Maryland House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
145 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

HB 621 - Support

Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, 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 supports House Bill 621, which would alter the qualifications for local board counsel by allowing an individual to be a registered voter of the State, rather than being restricted to the specific jurisdiction of the local board of elections (LBE).

Currently, the requirement for counsel to be a registered voter of the specific jurisdiction they serve can create significant hurdles for recruitment. Rural jurisdictions, in particular, often struggle to fill vital specialized positions because their smaller populations may not include residents with the niche legal expertise required for election law. Additionally, much of the day-to-day advisory work for Board Counsel is conducted via remote consultation, with in-person attendance primarily essential only during some monthly board meetings and during canvasses.

This change ensures that a jurisdiction's geographic boundaries do not prevent it from accessing the same high-level legal talent available to larger metropolitan areas. By broadening this residency requirement to the State level, LBEs gain the flexibility to recruit and retain the best possible legal advice to navigate increasingly complex election statutes.

Furthermore, as an emergency measure, this bill allows the boards **currently** facing vacancies or transitions to immediately benefit from an expanded pool of qualified candidates. This helps ensure that local boards will have the necessary legal support in place ahead of the 2026 primary elections.

MAEO is committed to ensuring fair, efficient, and accessible elections. We believe this administrative adjustment strengthens the stability of local board operations.

We respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 621.