

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 540 (Delegate Barve. *et al.*)

Commerce and Government Matters

Charter Counties - Proposed Charter Amendments - Number of Petition Signatures

This bill proposes a constitutional amendment to authorize Baltimore City and the charter counties to modify, by charter amendment, the number of petition signatures required to propose a charter amendment to any number not exceeding 20% of the registered voters of the city or county, but not less than 5%. The charter counties are: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Talbot, and Wicomico. Current law requires a petition proposing a charter amendment be signed by no less than 20% of the registered voters of the city or county, or at least 10,000 voters.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Minimal, as discussed below.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Fiscal Analysis

State Expenditures: The Maryland Constitution requires that proposed amendments to the Constitution be publicized in at least two newspapers in each county, if available, and in at least three newspapers in Baltimore City once a week for four weeks immediately preceding a general election. The costs associated with these requirements are borne by the State. The budget of the State Board of Elections for fiscal 1999 contains funding for publishing constitutional amendments for the 1998 general election.

Local Expenditures: If a charter county or Baltimore City reduces the number of petition signatures required to propose a charter amendment, it could result in more proposals being placed on election ballots. However, the additional costs would be minimal.

If approved by the General Assembly, this constitutional amendment will be submitted to the voters at the 1998 general election. It should not require additional costs for the county election boards to administer the election.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City; Anne Arundel, Montgomery, Prince George's, Talbot, and Wicomico counties; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Thomas Hickey

Reviewed by: David F. Roose

Direct Inquiries to:

John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst

(410) 841-3710

(301) 858-3710