

**Department of Legislative Services**  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2016 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Enrolled - Revised**

House Bill 1008  
 Ways and Means

(Delegate Turner, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Election Law - Early Voting Centers**

This bill increases the required number of early voting centers in counties with more than 200,000 registered voters.

The bill takes effect January 1, 2017.

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by approximately \$90,000 annually, beginning in FY 2018, due to voting system costs for additional early voting centers. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	0	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
Net Effect	\$0	(\$90,000)	(\$90,000)	(\$90,000)	(\$90,000)

*Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect*

**Local Effect:** Local government expenditures increase collectively, beginning in FY 2018, by approximately \$550,000 in fiscal years in which a primary election occurs and approximately \$725,000 in fiscal years in which a general election occurs. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** None.

## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** The required number of early voting centers in each county is modified as shown in **Exhibit 1**.

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### Exhibit 1 Early Voting Centers

Current Law		Under the Bill	
<u>Registered Voters in a County</u>	<u>Early Voting Centers*</u>	<u>Registered Voters in a County</u>	<u>Early Voting Centers*</u>
< 125,000	1	< 125,000	1
125,000-300,000	3	125,000-200,000	3
300,000-450,000	5	200,000-300,000	4
>450,000	8	300,000-450,000	7
		> 450,000	11

\*Under current law, in addition to the required centers, each county may establish one additional early voting center if the State Board of Elections, in collaboration with the local board of elections, and the governing body of the county agree to establish an additional center. Under the bill, this option for an additional center just applies to counties with less than 200,000 registered voters.

Note: Under Chapter 7 of 2016, Montgomery County has 10 early voting centers, for 2016 only.

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**Current Law/Background:** Early voting was first implemented in 2010 and was expanded under Chapters 157 and 158 of 2013, which increased the number of early voting centers and the length of the early voting period. There are 67 early voting centers currently established for the 2016 elections. The early voting period runs from the second Thursday before the election through the Thursday before the election. A voter may vote at any early voting center in the voter's county of residence. For further background information on early voting see the attached **Appendix – Early and Absentee Voting**.

**State Fiscal Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by approximately \$90,000 annually, beginning in fiscal 2018, due to costs of additional voting equipment and voting equipment transportation for additional early voting centers. The State Board of Elections shares voting system costs with the local boards of elections pursuant to Chapter 564 of 2001. This estimate accounts for 11 additional early voting centers being established for the 2018 and future elections as a result of the bill.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** Local government expenditures increase collectively, beginning in fiscal 2018, by approximately \$550,000 in fiscal years in which a primary election occurs and approximately \$725,000 in fiscal years in which a general election occurs. This estimate accounts for 11 additional early voting centers being established for the 2018 and future elections in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties, and Baltimore City. The larger cost increase for general elections is due to greater numbers of election judges being allocated to early voting centers for general elections in some jurisdictions.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections, Baltimore City, Montgomery and Prince George's counties, Maryland Association of Counties, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 2, 2016  
kb/hlb Revised - Enrolled Bill - May 16, 2016

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## Appendix – Early and Absentee Voting

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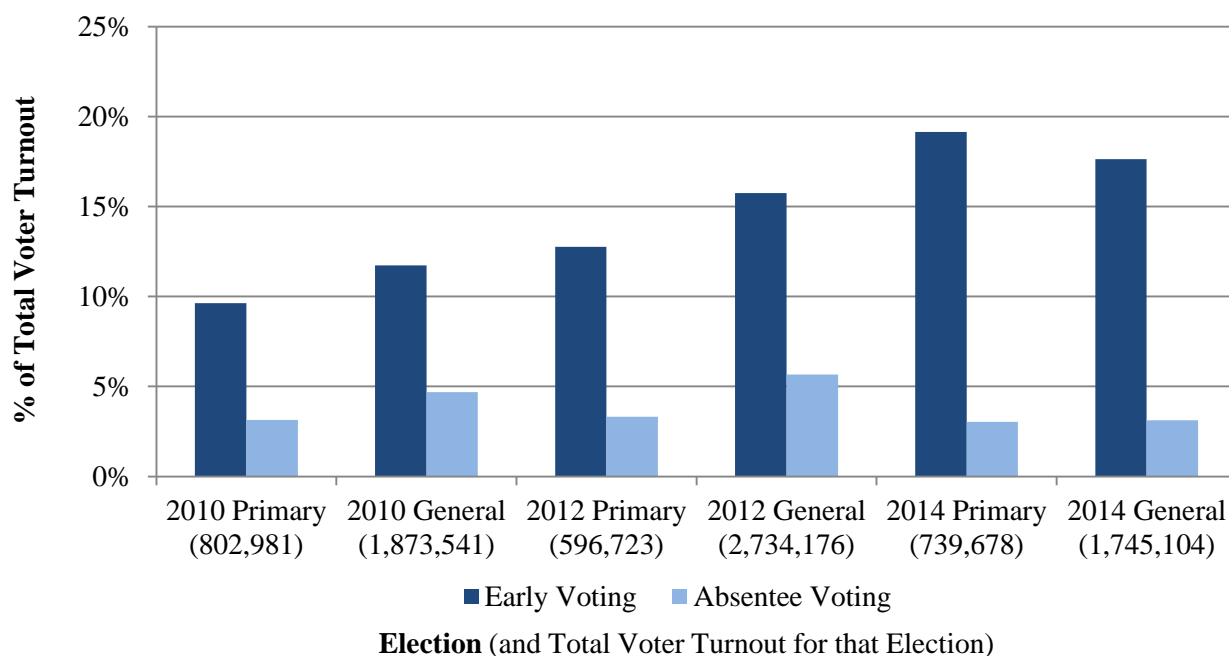
### *In Maryland*

Maryland voters have the option of voting at an early voting center prior to election day or by absentee ballot, as alternatives to voting at a polling place on election day. In-person early voting at early voting centers was first implemented in 2010 and “no excuse” absentee voting (not requiring a reason that a voter cannot vote in person) was first allowed in 2006.

**Exhibit 1** shows that, as a percentage of overall turnout in the 2010 through 2014 elections, use of early voting has been generally increasing, from just under 10% in the 2010 primary election to over 15% in recent elections, and use of absentee voting has been relatively consistent, between 3% and 6%.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Maryland Early and Absentee Voting Turnout**  
**2010-2014**



Source: State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

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There were additional early voting centers and a longer early voting period for the 2014 elections pursuant to Chapters 157 and 158 of 2013. **Exhibit 2** and **Exhibit 3** show HB 1008/ Page 4

the changes made by Chapters 157 and 158. The number of early voting centers in each county, for the 2016 elections, is shown in **Exhibit 4**. A voter may vote at any early voting center in the voter's county of residence. In addition, pursuant to Chapters 157 and 158, an individual will be able to both register to vote (or change his/her voter registration address) and vote at an early voting center in 2016.

Chapters 157 and 158 also expanded and clarified the methods by which a voter may request and receive an absentee ballot. An absentee ballot must be requested in writing (there are State and federal forms that can be used) or, pursuant to Chapters 157 and 158, a request can be submitted online through the State Board of Elections website. The available methods for a voter to receive an absentee ballot are (1) by mail; (2) by facsimile transmission; (3) through the Internet; or (4) by hand during an in-person transaction. To return an absentee ballot, a voter may either mail in the completed ballot, postmarked on or before election day, or deliver it to the local board of elections in person by the close of polls on election day.

#### *In Other States*

Research by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) indicates that 37 states and the District of Columbia offer some form of in-person early voting, and 27 states and the District of Columbia permit no excuse absentee voting. Colorado, Oregon, and Washington conduct all elections by mail.

The timing and length of early voting periods varies among the early voting states. According to NCSL, the average starting time for early voting is 22 days before an election. NCSL indicates that the average length of early voting periods across the states is 19 days and early voting typically ends just a few days before election day.

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**Exhibit 2**  
**Early Voting Centers**

<b>Prior to Chs. 157/158</b>		<b>Under Chs. 157/158</b>	
<b><u>Registered Voters in a County</u></b>	<b><u>Early Voting Centers</u></b>	<b><u>Registered Voters in a County</u></b>	<b><u>Early Voting Centers*</u></b>
< 150,000	1	< 125,000	1
150,000-300,000	3	125,000-300,000	3
> 300,000	5	300,000-450,000	5
		> 450,000	8

\*In addition to these required centers, each county may establish one additional early voting center if the State Board of Elections, in collaboration with the local board of elections, and the governing body of the county agree to establish an additional center.

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**Exhibit 3**  
**Early Voting Days and Hours**

<b>Prior to Chs. 157/158</b>		<b>Under Chs. 157/158</b>
<b><u>2010 Elections</u></b>	<b><u>2012 Elections</u></b>	<b><u>2014 and Future Elections</u></b>
<i><u>Days (6)</u></i>	<i><u>Days (6)</u></i>	<i><u>Days (8)</u></i>
Second Friday before the election through Thursday before the election, excluding Sunday	Second Saturday before the election through Thursday before the election	Second Thursday before the election through Thursday before the election
<i><u>Hours</u></i>	<i><u>Hours</u></i>	<i><u>Hours</u></i>
10 a.m.-8 p.m. (each day)	10 a.m.-8 p.m. (Saturday; Monday-Thursday) 12 noon-6 p.m. (Sunday)	Presidential general election: 8 a.m.-8 p.m. (each day)  All other elections: 10 a.m.-8 p.m. (each day)

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**Exhibit 4**  
**Early Voting Centers in Each County**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Registered Voters (December 2015)</b>	<b>Early Voting Centers in the 2016 Elections</b>
Montgomery	631,981	10
Prince George's	551,143	8
Baltimore	536,220	9
Baltimore City	369,051	6
Anne Arundel	362,933	5
Howard	201,297	3
Harford	169,209	4
Frederick	157,108	3
Carroll	118,077	1
Charles	103,480	2
Washington	91,387	1
St. Mary's	66,363	1
Cecil	62,297	1
Calvert	61,103	1
Wicomico	57,793	1
Allegany	42,709	1
Worcester	36,708	1
Queen Anne's	33,686	2
Talbot	26,254	1
Dorchester	20,738	1
Garrett	19,300	2
Caroline	19,041	1
Somerset	13,076	1
Kent	12,884	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,763,838</b>	<b>67</b>

Source: State Board of Elections

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