

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 310

(Senator Hayes, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Baltimore City – 2020 General Election – Early Voting Centers

This bill requires that Baltimore City have eight early voting centers (instead of seven) for the 2020 general election. The bill also requires that the eighth early voting center be located (1) to the extent practicable, at Frederick Douglass High School or (2) if Frederick Douglass High School is unavailable for use as an early voting center, within a one-quarter mile radius of Mondawmin Metro Station. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2020, and terminates January 31, 2021.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$10,800 in FY 2021 only. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	10,800	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$10,800)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: Baltimore City expenditures increase by \$80,000 in FY 2021 only. Revenues are not affected. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Each county (including Baltimore City) is required to have a certain number of early voting centers, based on the number of registered voters in the county, as

shown in **Exhibit 1**. (Baltimore City has 392,000 registered voters, according to the most recent voter registration statistics, for February 2020.) Pursuant to State Board of Elections (SBE) regulations, the number of registered voters in a county is determined as of eight months prior to the primary election. Each county may establish one additional early voting center if SBE, in collaboration with the local board of elections, and the governing body of the county agree to establish an additional center.

Exhibit 1
Required Early Voting Centers

Registered Voters In a County	Early Voting Centers
<125,000	1
125,000-200,000	3
200,000-300,000	4
300,000-450,000	7
>450,000	11

Background: Early voting was first implemented in 2010 and was expanded under Chapters 157 and 158 of 2013 and Chapter 288 of 2016. There are 79 early voting centers for the 2020 primary and general 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.

No later than six months before a primary election, SBE, in collaboration with the local board in each county, must designate each early voting center in that county. (The bill makes an exception to this requirement for the eighth early voting center in Baltimore City required by the bill.)

Early voting centers are open, in a presidential general election, during the hours between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. each early voting day. In all other elections, early voting centers are open during the hours between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. each early voting day.

For further background information on early voting, see the attached **Appendix – Early and Absentee Voting**.

State Fiscal Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$10,800 in fiscal 2021 – for the 2020 general election – due to costs of additional voting equipment, ballots, and voting equipment transportation for the additional early voting center in Baltimore City. SBE

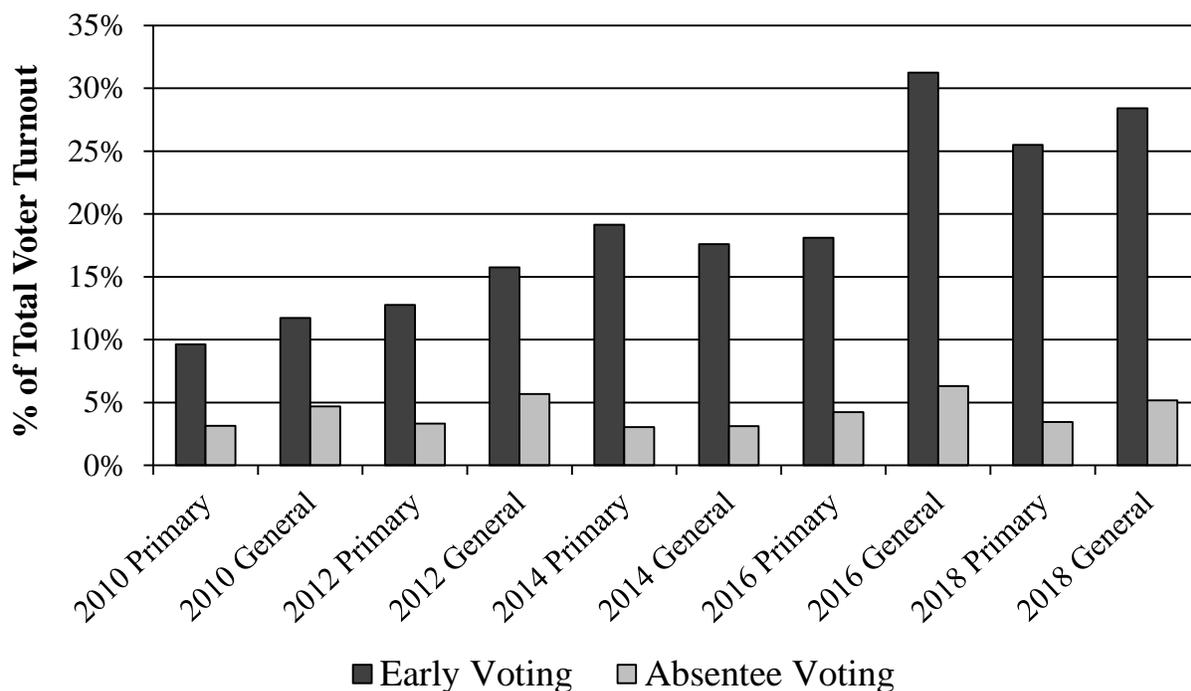
Appendix – Early and Absentee Voting

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 2018 elections, use of early voting has been generally increasing, surpassing 25% in recent elections, and use of absentee voting has been between 3% and 7%.

Exhibit 1
Maryland Early and Absentee Voting Turnout
2010-2018



Election (and Total Voter Turnout for that Election)

Source: State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

Chapters 157 and 158 of 2013 increased the number of early voting centers and the length of the early voting period, and Chapter 288 of 2016 further increased the number of centers. **Exhibit 2** and **Exhibit 3** show the changes made by Chapters 157 and 158 and Chapter 288. The number of early voting centers in each county, for the 2018 general election, 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 has been able to both register to vote (or change his/her voter registration address) and vote at an early voting center since 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 (SBE) 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 (1) mail in the completed ballot, postmarked on or before Election Day; (2) deliver it to the local board of elections in person by the close of polls on Election Day; or (3) pursuant to an SBE regulation change effective in January 2020, deliver it to a polling place before the polls close at that polling place on Election Day.

In Other States

Research by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) indicates that (1) in 2020, 40 states and the District of Columbia will offer some form of in-person early voting and (2) 33 states and the District of Columbia either permit no excuse absentee voting or, in some cases, conduct all elections by mail. Among those 33 states, Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah, 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.

**Exhibit 2
Early Voting Centers**

Prior to Chs. 157/158		Under Chs. 157/158		Under Ch. 288 (Current Law)	
Registered Voters in a <u>County</u>	<u>Early Voting Centers</u>	Registered Voters in a <u>County</u>	<u>Early Voting Centers*</u>	Registered Voters in a <u>County</u>	<u>Early Voting Centers*</u>
< 150,000	1	< 125,000	1	< 125,000	1
150,000-300,000	3	125,000-300,000	3	125,000-200,000	3
> 300,000	5	300,000-450,000	5	200,000-300,000	4
		> 450,000	8	300,000-450,000	7
				> 450,000	11

*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. Chapter 288 limited this option to apply only to counties with less than 200,000 registered voters, but Chapter 539 of 2019 removed that limitation.

Source: Department of Legislative Services

Exhibit 3
Early Voting Days and Hours

Prior to Chs. 157/158

2010 Elections

Days (6)

Second Friday before the election
through Thursday before the election,
excluding Sunday

Hours

10 a.m.-8 p.m. (each day)

2012 Elections

Days (6)

Second Saturday before the election
through Thursday before the election

Hours

10 a.m.-8 p.m. (Saturday;
Monday-Thursday)
12 noon-6 p.m. (Sunday)

**Under Chs. 157/158 (Current Law;
No Changes Were Made by Ch. 288)**

2014 and Future Elections

Days (8)

Second Thursday before the election
through Thursday before the election

Hours

Presidential general election:
8 a.m.-8 p.m. (each day)

All other elections:
10 a.m.-8 p.m. (each day)

Source: Department of Legislative Services

Exhibit 4
Early Voting Centers in Each County

<u>Jurisdiction</u>	<u>Registered Voters (December 2018)</u>	<u>Early Voting Centers 2018 General Election</u>
Allegany	43,436	1
Anne Arundel	394,529	7
Baltimore City	393,029	7
Baltimore	561,443	11
Calvert	66,605	1
Caroline	20,495	1
Carroll	123,565	2
Cecil	66,398	1
Charles	114,818	2
Dorchester	21,611	1
Frederick	177,016	4
Garrett	20,006	2
Harford	183,711	4
Howard	220,609	4
Kent	13,232	1
Montgomery	670,134	11
Prince George's	589,433	11
Queen Anne's	36,364	2
St. Mary's	71,937	1
Somerset	13,307	1
Talbot	27,291	1
Washington	97,010	1
Wicomico	62,847	1
Worcester	39,280	1
Total	4,028,106	79

Source: State Board of Elections
