

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 211 (Delegate Bhandari)
 Ways and Means

Election Law - Early Voting Centers - Days of Operation

This bill modifies the days during which early voting centers are open for voting, so that the centers are open from the second Thursday before a primary or general election through the *Saturday* (replacing Thursday) before the election.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by at least \$24,000 in FY 2022, with ongoing expenditure increases in future years. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	24,000	24,000	24,000	26,000	24,000
Net Effect	(\$24,000)	(\$24,000)	(\$24,000)	(\$26,000)	(\$24,000)

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

Local Effect: Local government expenditures increase by at least \$474,000 in FY 2022, with ongoing expenditure increases in future years. Revenues are not affected. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Each early voting center must be open for voting beginning the second Thursday before a primary or general election through the Thursday before the election. In a presidential general election, early voting centers are open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. each early voting day and in all other elections they are open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

State and Local Fiscal Effect: Increasing the number of days early voting centers are open is expected to increase the State and local boards of elections' costs.

Both the State and local boards of elections' costs increase for additional compensation of voting system support personnel under the State Board of Elections' (SBE) staffing contract and for increased voting equipment transportation costs (resulting from equipment being returned from the early voting centers on a weekend rather than during the week), both of which are voting system costs shared by the State and local boards of elections. General fund expenditures and local government expenditures each increase by approximately \$24,000 each fiscal year, beginning in fiscal 2022 (with a slight increase in fiscal 2025 due to additional early voting hours for presidential general elections), for the additional voting system support personnel compensation and voting equipment transportation costs.

Local board of elections costs also increase, collectively, by a minimum of \$450,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2022, representing the cost of additional election judge compensation for the two additional days of early voting. This estimate is based on past SBE surveys of local board election judge allocation and compensation for early voting and Election Day.

SBE and the local boards of elections have indicated that other cost increases, at least at the local level, are likely to be incurred, but those costs have not been quantified on a statewide basis at this time. SBE indicates that there may be other cost increases incurred by the State and local boards of elections as a result of having to make the transition from early voting to Election Day (which includes the process of ensuring that voter data included in election day pollbooks reflects individuals that voted during early voting) within a shorter period of time. Local boards have indicated they will incur other costs in addition to the election judge costs to support the two additional days of early voting. Of a small number of counties contacted, Montgomery County, for example, expects to incur an additional \$92,000 each fiscal year in staff overtime costs and costs to recruit and train the additional election judges needed for the two additional days of early voting, as well as at least \$53,000 in costs in fiscal 2022, and at least \$20,000 in costs in subsequent fiscal years, associated with a need for additional ballots (and carts and equipment for the ballots) for the two additional days of early voting. Harford and Talbot counties expect to incur \$2,000 and \$2,380 in fiscal 2022 (with ongoing costs in future years), respectively, in additional facilities, staff, and other costs.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): State Board of Elections; Baltimore City; Harford, Montgomery, and Talbot counties; Department of Legislative Services

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rh/hlb

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