

Department of Legislative Services  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
 Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 745  
 Ways and Means

(Delegate Luedtke)  
 Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Election Law - Early Voting Centers

This bill adjusts the voter registration-based requirements for the number of early voting centers in each county, resulting in a greater number of early voting centers in certain counties. The bill also modifies provisions that govern (1) the designation of the location of early voting centers and (2) the optional establishment of one additional early voting center in each county (in addition to the required centers).

Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by \$100,000 annually beginning in FY 2022, by \$105,000 annually beginning in FY 2024, and by \$120,000 annually beginning in FY 2026. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	100,000	100,000	105,000	105,000	120,000
Net Effect	(\$100,000)	(\$100,000)	(\$105,000)	(\$105,000)	(\$120,000)

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

**Local Effect:** Local government expenditures increase collectively by \$830,000 annually beginning in FY 2022, by \$900,000 annually beginning in FY 2024, and by \$1.1 million annually beginning in FY 2026. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** None.

## Analysis

**Bill Summary/Current Law:** 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	<50,000	1
125,000-200,000	3	50,000-100,000	2
200,000-300,000	4	100,000-200,000	3
300,000-450,000	7	200,000-300,000	5
>450,000	11	300,000-400,000	7
		400,000-500,000	9
		500,000-600,000	11
		≥600,000	13

\*Under current law and under the bill, counties may establish one additional early voting center (in addition to the required centers).

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The bill modifies requirements relating to the designation of each early voting center in a county. Under current law, the State Board of Elections (SBE) designates each early voting center in a county in collaboration with the local board of elections in that county. Under the bill, the local board in each county, subject to the approval of SBE, must designate each early voting center in that county. The bill also adds a new requirement that, when determining the location of an early voting center, a local board take into account:

- accessibility of the early voting center to historically disenfranchised communities, including cultural groups, ethnic groups, and minority groups;
- proximity of the early voting center to dense concentrations of voters;
- accessibility of the early voting center by public transportation;
- ensuring equitable distribution of early voting centers throughout the county; and
- maximizing voter participation, including through the use of community centers and public gathering places as locations for early voting centers.

The bill also modifies the existing authorization for each county to establish one additional early voting center in addition to the required centers. Under current law, an additional early voting center may be established if SBE, in collaboration with the local board, and the governing body of the county agree to establish an additional early voting center. Under the bill, an additional early voting center may be established if, first, the local board and the governing body of the county agree to establish an additional early voting center and, then, SBE approves the establishment of the additional early voting center.

**State and Local Fiscal Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by \$100,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2022, by \$105,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2024, and by \$120,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2026, due to costs of additional voting equipment and voting equipment transportation for additional early voting centers. SBE shares voting system costs with the local boards of elections pursuant to Chapter 564 of 2001.

Local government expenditures increase collectively by \$830,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2022, by \$900,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2024, and by \$1.1 million annually beginning in fiscal 2026, due to the costs of additional voting equipment and voting equipment transportation (shared with the State), and operating costs, for additional early voting centers.

The estimate assumes that the optional early voting centers provided by various counties in the 2020 general election are continued in future elections in the absence of the bill. The estimate assumes, based on voter registration levels and past voter registration growth in the various counties, that (1) 14 additional early voting centers are established for the 2022 elections; (2) a net of 1 additional early voting center (for a total of 15) is established for the 2024 elections (2 are added in 2024 and 1 that was added for 2022 is no longer considered a cost of the bill in 2024 since it is assumed to be added under current law in 2024); and (3) 2 more (for a total of 17) additional early voting centers are established for the 2026 and future elections, as shown below:

- Anne Arundel – 2 early voting centers added in 2022;
- Baltimore City – 1 early voting center added in 2022;
- Baltimore – 2 early voting centers added in 2026;
- Calvert – 1 early voting center added in 2022;
- Cecil – 1 early voting center added in 2022;
- Charles – 1 early voting center added in 2022 (but considered to no longer be a cost of the bill by 2024 since it is assumed to be added under current law in 2024);
- Frederick – 1 early voting center added in 2024;
- Harford – 1 early voting center added in 2024;
- Montgomery – 2 early voting centers added in 2022;
- Prince George’s – 2 early voting centers added in 2022;

- St. Mary’s – 1 early voting center added in 2022;
- Washington – 2 early voting centers added in 2022; and
- Wicomico – 1 early voting center added in 2022.

The cost estimates are based on average operating costs of early voting centers for counties in different tiers of voter registration populations (Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties in the top tier; Anne Arundel County and Baltimore City in the next tier; *etc.*) across primary and general elections, along with information provided by SBE regarding amounts of equipment used per early voting center by the different counties in 2018. The average operating costs per early voting center are based on past early voting cost information collected by the Department of Legislative Services, adjusted using more recent information provided by certain local boards of elections. Actual operating costs may be somewhat lower in primary election years and higher in general election years, because of lower and higher expected voter turnout, respectively.

This estimate is based on costs for the State’s current voting system, the contract for which extends through the 2022 elections. Actual voting system costs associated with this bill may vary from this estimate depending on how costs of the statewide voting system change for the 2024 and future elections.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections; Baltimore City; Anne Arundel, Carroll, Frederick, and Montgomery counties; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 15, 2021  
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Analysis by: Scott D. Kennedy

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510