

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2022 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader - Revised**

House Bill 554  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Rosenberg)

---

**Election Law - Petitions - Signatures**

---

This bill makes specified changes to provisions applicable to signing a petition and the validation and counting of petition signatures. **The bill takes effect January 1, 2023.**

---

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The bill does not materially affect State finances.

**Local Effect:** The bill is not expected to materially affect local government finances.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

---

**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** The bill requires an individual's name to be signed in ink and eliminates a specific requirement that an individual sign their name as it appears on the statewide voter registration list, or the individual's surname of registration and at least one full given name and the initials of any other names. The bill requires the signature of an individual to be validated and counted if, along with meeting other requirements, the identity of the individual reasonably can be determined from the information required to be included by the individual on the petition. The bill prohibits an election authority, if the election authority reasonably can confirm the identity of an individual, from invalidating the individual's signature because the individual signed a petition using a derivative of the individual's given name, unless the individual's surname on a petition does not exactly match the individual's surname as it appears in the individual's voter registration record.

The bill repeals a prohibition against willfully and knowingly signing a petition more than once and establishes that if an individual signs the same petition more than once, the first signature of that individual to be validated must be counted and any subsequent signature of that individual on the same petition must be invalidated.

**Current Law:** A petition authorized by law to place the name of an individual or a question on the ballot, or to create a new political party, must contain an information page (containing, among other things, a description of the subject and purpose of the petition and identification of the sponsor) and signature pages containing not less than the total number of signatures required by law to be filed.

To sign a petition, an individual must sign the individual's name as it appears on the statewide voter registration list, or the individual's surname of registration and at least one full given name and the initials of any other names. The individual must also include, printed or typed, the signer's name as it was signed, the signer's address, the date of signing, and other information required by State Board of Elections regulations.

The signature of an individual is validated and counted if the above-mentioned requirements have been satisfied and, among other requirements, the individual has not previously signed the same petition. A person who willfully and knowingly signs a petition more than once is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to (1) a fine of at least \$10 but not more than \$250 and/or imprisonment for at least 30 days but not more than 6 months and (2) disqualification, permanently, from serving as an election judge, board member, or employee of a board.

---

### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Montgomery County; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 13, 2022  
rh/hlb Revised - Clarification - February 23, 2022

---

Analysis by: Scott D. Kennedy

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