

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 153

(Delegate Fair, *et al.*)

Ways and Means

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Election Law - Voter Registration - Age and Notification to Minors

This bill lowers the age at which an individual may register to vote, from age 16 to age 15 and 9 months. The bill also establishes that a voter notification card sent to a qualified voter registration applicant who is under the age of 18 must contain information regarding when the individual will be eligible to vote. In addition, the election director in a county where a registered voter becomes eligible to vote in a primary election before age 18 (discussed below under Current Law) must send the voter (1) a notice that the voter is eligible to vote in the next scheduled primary election and (2) information on available voting methods and the location of the applicable early voting centers and polling place. The election director must send the notice during the time period determined by the State Board of Elections (SBE).

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not directly affect State finances.

Local Effect: Local government expenditures increase, collectively, by at least \$10,000 in FY 2026 and relatively minimally in future years. Revenues are not affected. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Voter Eligibility and Registration

Under State law, with certain exceptions, an individual may register to vote if the individual is a citizen of the United States, is at least age 16, and is a resident of the State as of the day the individual seeks to register.

However, an individual under the age of 18 who is registered to vote may not vote except in a primary election in which candidates are nominated for a general or special election that will occur when the individual is at least age 18.

Voter Notification

The election director in the county where a voter registration applicant resides must send a voter acknowledgment notice, in a format prescribed by SBE, to each applicant informing them whether he or she is qualified to become registered and, if not qualified, the reasons why.

A voter notification card sent to a qualified applicant may serve as a voter acknowledgment notice. The voter notification card must contain the name and address of the voter, the date of issue, and the district or ward and precinct of the voter. SBE regulations also require that the registered voter's party affiliation, if any, and name and address of the appropriate polling place be included on the card. The card is evidence that the individual to whom it is issued is a registered voter on the date appearing on the card. The election director must issue a replacement card on request of the voter and a new card when a relevant change is made in the voter's registration record if the voter continues to reside in the county.

Local Expenditures: Local government expenditures increase, collectively, by at least \$10,000 in fiscal 2026, for one-time development costs billed to the local boards of elections by SBE, in accordance with the State's current cost-sharing structure with the local boards, for modifications in the statewide voter registration system needed to implement the bill's notification requirements.

Local government expenditures also increase relatively minimally for the local boards to send notices to registered voters who are eligible to vote in the next scheduled primary election because they will turn 18 by the time of the general election. The extent of the increase in local government expenditures cannot be reliably estimated because it depends on the number of individuals who meet that criteria prior to each primary election (those

that will turn 18 between the primary and general election), but it is expected to be relatively minimal.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last the three years. See HB 436 of 2024.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Carroll, Harford, and St. Mary's counties; Maryland Association of Counties; Maryland State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 17, 2025
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