

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 317
 Ways and Means

(Delegates Williams and Wilkins)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Election Law - Curbside Voting - Pilot Program

This bill establishes a Curbside Voting Pilot Program, to be implemented in three counties designated by the State Board of Elections (SBE), to test the viability of curbside voting in the State. SBE and each local board must emphasize in communications with voters and the general public that curbside voting is primarily an accommodation for voters with disabilities, as defined in the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), voters with limited mobility, and elderly voters. By September 1, 2029, SBE must report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the pilot program. **The bill takes effect October 1, 2025, and terminates September 30, 2029.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by at least \$249,000 in FY 2026 and by at least \$257,000 in FY 2027 (and similar amounts in FY 2028 and 2029), as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	249,000	257,000	261,000	266,000	0
Net Effect	(\$249,000)	(\$257,000)	(\$261,000)	(\$266,000)	\$0

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

Local Effect: Local government expenditures increase by at least \$167,000 in FY 2026 and by at least \$160,000 in FY 2027, 2028, and 2029. Revenues are not affected. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Curbside Voting Pilot Program

The bill establishes a Curbside Voting Pilot Program to test the viability of curbside voting in the State. SBE, in conjunction with the local boards of elections, must implement and administer the pilot program.

“Curbside voting” is defined to mean the process by which a voter completes and casts a ballot at a designated outside location and under observation of election judges.

SBE must designate the following counties in which to implement the pilot program: (1) one county with a comparatively small number of registered voters; (2) one county with a comparatively medium number of registered voters; and (3) one county with a comparatively large number of registered voters.

At least six months before each statewide primary election, the local board of elections of each county designated by SBE to implement the pilot program must designate a location for curbside voting outside:

- during early voting, one early voting center or other appropriate building as determined by the local board; and
- on election day (1) the office of the local board; (2) if using the office of the local board is not practicable, one polling place; or (3) if using the office of the local board or a polling place is not practicable, an appropriate building as determined by the local board.

Curbside voting must be made available at each designated location to any registered voter on request on the days and during the hours that early voting centers and polling places are open. SBE and each local board must emphasize in communications with voters and the general public, including signage at each curbside voting location, that curbside voting is primarily an accommodation for voters with disabilities, as defined in ADA, voters with limited mobility, and elderly voters.

A local board must take into account the following factors when determining a location for curbside voting:

- accessibility of the location to historically disenfranchised communities;
- proximity of the location to dense concentrations of voters;
- accessibility of the location by public transportation; and

- maximizing voter participation, including through the use of community centers and public gathering places as locations for curbside voting.

The curbside voting location must be equipped to (1) allow the voter to complete the ballot without assistance, unless assistance is requested by the voter, and (2) preserve the secrecy of the voter's ballot while voting.

The bill prohibits SBE from certifying a voting system unless it determines that the voting system used in the Curbside Voting Pilot Program will accommodate curbside voting.

SBE must adopt regulations to implement the bill.

Curbside Voting Boundary

In accordance with regulations adopted by SBE, the local board of elections must establish (1) a line around each curbside voting location beyond which canvassing, electioneering, or posting of campaign material is prohibited and (2) a boundary around a car that is waiting in line for curbside voting within which canvassing and electioneering is prohibited.

However, if a curbside voting location is established outside an early voting center or polling place, the local board must, to the maximum extent practicable, (1) establish the curbside voting location within the electioneering boundary of the early voting center or polling place and (2) avoid expanding the area within the electioneering boundary of the early voting center or polling place to accommodate the curbside voting location.

Curbside Voting Process

At each curbside voting location, the local board of elections must:

- post signs informing voters of (1) the location of curbside voting and (2) how to notify an election judge that the voter is waiting at the curbside voting location; and
- ensure that voters receive prompt service from the election judges.

A voter seeking to use curbside voting must (1) request curbside voting from an election judge at the curbside voting location and (2) provide an election judge with the information required to check in the voter through the pollbook at the curbside voting location. An election judge must give a voter using curbside voting the choice to vote by marking a paper ballot or by using a ballot marking device at the curbside voting location. If the voter chooses to vote using a paper ballot, after marking the ballot, the voter must deposit the ballot in the container provided by the election judge to be counted. If the voter chooses to vote using a ballot marking device, an election judge must bring a ballot marking device outside to the voter.

Current Law: A registered voter may either vote a mail-in (absentee) ballot or vote in person at an early voting center or Election Day polling place.

Mail-in (Absentee) Voting

Any registered voter may request a mail-in ballot and may return it by mailing or hand delivering the ballot to the voter's local board or delivering it to a ballot drop box, an early voting center, or an Election Day polling place in the voter's county of residence. A registered voter may also request to be added to the permanent mail-in ballot list and receive a mail-in ballot each time there is an election without having to submit further requests.

In-person Voting

Each county is required to offer a certain number of early voting centers, determined by the number of registered voters in the county, to allow a voter to vote in-person before Election Day. Early voting centers are open, in a regular primary or general election, from the second Thursday before the election through the Thursday before the election during the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. each early voting day. An individual may register (if not already registered) and vote at any early voting center within their county of residence.

Individuals who choose to vote in person on Election Day may register (if not already registered) and vote at their assigned polling place (the polling place for the precinct in which they reside). A polling place is open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

In the 2024 primary and general elections, there were [97](#) early voting centers and over [1,400](#) polling places statewide.

A registered voter is not required to show identification in order to vote (with the exception of certain first-time voters) but an in-person registered voter is asked to state the month and day of their birth to verify their identity. A person who registers to vote at an early voting center or an Election Day polling place, just prior to voting, must provide proof of residency (*e.g.*, driver's license, State ID card, utility bill, etc.) and must otherwise be qualified to register to vote.

Maryland law requires that the State's voting system provide a voter-verifiable paper record, which is satisfied by the State's current voting system's use of a paper ballot. A voter who appears in person to vote, at an early voting center or Election Day polling place, is given the choice to mark a ballot by hand or to mark a ballot using a touchscreen ballot marking device. The voter reviews the marked ballot and then inserts the ballot into a scanner that tabulates the voter's votes and secures the ballot in a secured ballot box.

State Expenditures:

Quantified Costs

General fund expenditures increase by at least \$249,000 in fiscal 2026 and by at least \$257,000 in fiscal 2027 (and similar amounts in fiscal 2028 and 2029), consisting of (in fiscal 2026):

- **SBE staff position** – \$82,000 – an additional SBE staff position to implement the pilot program, including research of best practices and factors to consider for implementation of curbside voting, development of regulations, support and coordination of local boards’ efforts, and gathering and compilation of data on curbside voting use and implementation;
- **voter education** – \$134,000 – costs to send a postcard to each eligible voter in the three counties designated by SBE to implement the pilot program, prior to each election, to educate them on curbside voting and its availability;
- **election judges** – \$24,000 – costs of additional election judges to implement curbside voting at each designated location;
- **pollbooks** – \$4,000 – one-time costs for additional pollbooks and pollbook printers for each location (**availability of additional pollbooks is assumed, for the purposes of this estimate; however, SBE indicates that it cannot procure additional pollbooks**);
- **ballot marking devices** – \$2,000 – costs to lease additional ballot marking devices for each location; and
- **supplies** – \$3,000 – one-time costs for supplies (*e.g.*, signs, containers, canopies, and election judge alert systems) for each location.

Assumptions

The above-quantified costs, are based on the following assumptions:

- SBE bears the full cost of the SBE staff position, and shares the remainder of the quantified costs with the local boards, primarily because SBE and the local boards generally share responsibility for implementing the pilot program under the bill (to the extent the responsibility for the quantified costs differs from this assumption in practice, expenditures shift among SBE and the local boards accordingly);
- the curbside voting location in the designated “small” county has one voting station, the location in the “medium” county has two voting stations (at which two vehicles can be served simultaneously), and the location in the “large” county has three voting stations (at which three vehicles can be served simultaneously); and

- each voting station is overseen by two election judges (each paid \$50 for completing a course of instruction and at least \$400 per day for each early voting day and on Election Day, assuming the election judges chosen will be experienced judges warranting at least that level of compensation) and equipped with one pollbook and pollbook printer; one ballot marking device; and one set of supplies (signs, ballot container, canopy, and election judge alert system).

Potential Additional Costs Not Accounted for (Not Quantified)

The following additional costs maybe be incurred to implement the pilot program but have not been quantified due to uncertainty of the associated costs, or uncertainty of the level of need for these additional resources:

- **voting system contract modification** – SBE indicates that the voting system lease contract needs to be modified in order to operate the ballot marking devices outdoors, potentially resulting in additional expenditures under the contract;
- **additional paper ballots** – the number of paper ballots ordered for an election in the designated counties may need to be increased to have enough paper ballots available to voting stations if/when they are not located at an early voting center (similar to early voting centers, the voting stations need to have enough ballots of the various different ballots styles in the county (containing the different combinations of races/candidates for different areas of the county) to serve a voter from anywhere in the county);
- **security** – local boards have indicated a need for security measures for the curbside voting locations, potentially including security personnel, video surveillance, and/or other measures;
- **additional supplies** – local boards have indicated a potential greater need for supplies than is quantified above, including movable carts for the equipment and supplies needed at the voting stations and electrical capability and lighting for the voting stations; and
- **local board contractual personnel** – local boards have indicated a need for temporary contractual personnel during the time period surrounding an election to help implement curbside voting.

Local Expenditures: Under the assumptions discussed above, local government expenditures increase, collectively (for the three designated counties, accounting for the quantified costs above), by at least \$167,000 in fiscal 2026 and by at least \$160,000 in fiscal 2027, 2028, and 2029.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 641 of 2024; HB 41 of 2023; and HB 1404 of 2022.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Queen Anne's counties; Maryland State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

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