

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1163 (Howard County Delegation)
Government, Labor, and Elections

Howard County - Voting Age - Board of Education Elections
Ho. Co. 5-26

This proposed constitutional amendment, if approved by the voters at the next general election, gives the General Assembly the power to lower the age at which an individual may vote in an election for the members of the Howard County Board of Education. Contingent on the passage of the proposed amendment, and its ratification by the voters, the bill authorizes an individual who is at least age 16 to vote in an election for members of the Howard County Board of Education.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: If the constitutional amendment is approved, general fund expenditures increase by \$149,000 in FY 2027 and are expected to increase, at least minimally, in future years, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: If the constitutional amendment is approved, Howard County expenditures increase by \$149,000 in FY 2027 and are expected to increase in future years, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Voter Qualifications

Pursuant to Article I of the Maryland Constitution, every citizen of the United States, at least age 18, who is a resident of the State is eligible to vote in the ward or election district in which they reside. The General Assembly is authorized to regulate or prohibit the right

to vote of a person convicted of a serious crime or under care or guardianship for mental disability. The constitution requires individuals to be registered in order to vote.

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. An individual younger than age 18, (1) may vote 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 and (2) may not vote in any other election.

Howard County Board of Education

The Howard County Board of Education consists of seven elected members and one student member. The board is 1 of 20 elected school boards in the State. Four counties have combined appointed and elected school boards. **Appendix – Local Boards of Education Membership** shows the selection methods, terms of office, and membership of the 24 local boards of education.

State and Local Fiscal Effect:

Fiscal 2027

If the constitutional amendment is approved by the voters (in the 2026 general election), State general fund expenditures and Howard County expenditures each are expected to increase by \$149,000 in fiscal 2027, reflecting the State and Howard County shares of (1) one-time costs for programming changes to the Agency Election Management System and the voter registration system (\$260,000 total, \$130,000 each) and (2) one-time costs for pollbook software modifications (\$38,000 total, \$19,000 each).

These changes/modifications are needed in order to allow individuals under age 18 to vote in county board of education elections only, during elections when other voters are generally eligible to cast a vote for all offices/questions on the ballot. It is uncertain at this time how these costs will be divided between the State and Howard County; however, for the purposes of this fiscal and policy note, it is assumed that these costs are split evenly. It is also assumed the work is begun and completed in fiscal 2027 in advance of the 2028 statewide primary election. A portion of these costs may be incurred in fiscal 2028 to the extent work continues into fiscal 2028.

Fiscal 2028 and Future Years

If the constitutional amendment is approved by the voters, State general fund expenditures and Howard County expenditures also increase in fiscal 2028 and future years for costs of additional mail-in ballots and in-person ballots. State general fund expenditures and

Howard County expenditures for ballots are expected to increase by less than \$3,000 per election, respectively.

Howard County expenditures are also assumed to increase due to additional personnel costs associated with voting machine (scanner) testing related to the unique ballots that are provided to under-age-18 voters who are not otherwise eligible to vote. Howard County may also incur voter education costs. These additional expenditures, however, have not been quantified at this time.

Certain additional costs identified by the State Board of Elections and Howard County Board of Elections may be incurred; however, the Department of Legislative Services advises it is unclear whether incurring these costs is necessary: (1) leasing of additional scanners to scan the unique, board of education ballots created for under-age-18 voters who are not otherwise eligible to vote, at an estimated total cost of \$99,510 (the cost of which would be shared by the State and Howard County); and (2) costs for additional election judges and election judge training (predominantly incurred by Howard County).

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Board of Elections; Howard County; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 10, 2026
caw/sdk

Analysis by: Arnold H. Adja

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

Appendix – Local Boards of Education Membership

The composition of the local boards of education varies with members serving three- to four-year terms. Twenty counties have elected school boards and four counties have combined appointed and elected school boards. All 24 boards have either student members or student representatives who regularly present at board meetings; however, only 8 boards allow student members to vote, which generally excludes authority to vote on matters relating to collective bargaining and personnel. Three counties with voting student members also preclude student members from voting on matters relating to operating and capital budgets. **Exhibit 1** shows the selection methods, terms of office, and membership of the 24 local school boards.

Exhibit 1 Local Boards of Education As of January 2026

School System	Number of Members	Term		Means of Selection ¹
Allegany	6	4 years	E	5 from county at large 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Anne Arundel	8	4 years	E	7 from councilmanic districts 1 student (1-year term)
Baltimore City	12	3 or 4 years	A/E	2 elected from city at large 9 appointed by mayor 1 student (1-year term)
Baltimore	12	4 years	A/E	4 appointed by Governor from county at large 7 elected from councilmanic districts 1 student (1-year term)
Calvert	6	4 years	E	2 from county at large 3 from commissioner districts 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Caroline	7	4 years	A/E	3 elected from school board districts 2 appointed by Governor from county at large 2 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Carroll	11	4 years	E	5 from county at large 5 commissioners <i>ex officio</i> (nonvoting) 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Cecil	6	4 years	E	5 from commissioner districts 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)

School System	Number of Members	Term		Means of Selection ¹
Charles	10	4 years	E	1 from county at large 8 from commissioner districts 1 student (1-year term)
Dorchester	8	4 years	E	5 from councilmanic districts 3 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Frederick	8	4 years	E	7 from county at large 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Garrett	6	4 years	E	2 from county at large 3 from commissioner districts 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Harford	11	4 years	A/E	6 elected from councilmanic districts 3 appointed by County Executive from county at large 1 superintendent <i>ex officio</i> (nonvoting) 1 student (1-year term)
Howard	8	4 years	E	2 from county at large 5 from councilmanic districts 1 student (1-year term)
Kent	6	4 years	E	5 from county at large 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Montgomery	8	4 years	E	2 from county at large 5 from school districts 1 student (1-year term)
Prince George's	10	4 years	E	9 from school board districts 1 student (1-year term)
Queen Anne's	7	4 years	E	1 from county at large 4 from commissioner districts 2 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)
St. Mary's	6	4 years	E	1 from county at large 4 from commissioner districts 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Somerset ²	8	4 years	E	5 from commissioner districts 3 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)

School System	Number of Members	Term	Means of Selection¹
Talbot	9	4 years	E 7 from school board districts 2 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Washington ³	8	4 years	E 7 from county at large 1 student (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Wicomico ⁴	11	4 years	E 5 from councilmanic districts 2 from county at large 4 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)
Worcester	10	4 years	E 7 from commissioner districts 3 students (nonvoting, 1-year term)

¹ E = Elected and A/E = Combined appointed and elected board: (1) in Baltimore County, members are appointed by the Governor from a list of names provided by the Baltimore County School Board Nominating Commission; (2) in Caroline County, members are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate; (3) in Baltimore City, members are appointed by the mayor from a list of names provided by the Baltimore City Public School Board Community Panel; and (4) in Harford County, members are appointed by the county executive with the advice and consent of the county council.

² Although not in statute, the Somerset County Board of Education reports that there are three nonvoting student representatives who give presentations at board meetings on current events of interest at each of the three regular high schools in the county.

³ Although not in statute, the Washington County Board of Education reports that there is a student member on the board and that the student member can only concur on votes and must abstain from certain matters.

⁴ Chapter 429 of 2025 codified at least one nonvoting student member on the Wicomico County Board of Education. The Wicomico County Board of Education includes four student representatives who give presentations at board meetings on current events of interest at each of the four high schools in the county. At each meeting, one of the four student representatives sits with the regular board members on the dais for the full meeting, while other student board members come forward to speak as needed.

Source: Sections 3-101 through 3-1405 of the Education Article; Local Boards of Education