



Maryland Municipal League

The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 18, 2021

Committee: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Bill: SB 89 – Municipalities – Vacancies in Elected Offices

Position: Support With Amendment

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) supports SB 89 with amendments. As introduced, this measure would require a municipality to hold an election within 90 days of a vacancy in an elected municipal office.

We understand the importance of transparency and a public process, but this measure does not account for the diversity of elected municipal positions. Maryland has 157 municipalities, all with different charters, election budgets, legislative bodies, and term lengths. Broad mandates are often ill-fitting; local governments need flexibility to meet the needs of their communities and the requirements of their charters.

Consider a town with 1-year terms: under this measure, a vacancy occurring at any point during that year would trigger a special election, even though a general election is already scheduled to take place in less than a year. If a second vacancy occurred during the year, a third election would be required. This places a significant burden on the town.

Instead, MML would support requiring a special election for two or more vacancies that occur within the first half of their terms. This would protect the democratic process without triggering multiple elections within a short period of time. Given the financial and logistical burden of elections for local governments, especially our smaller members, MML would also support an amendment requiring the State to fund these special elections.

With the adoption of these amendments, the Maryland Municipal League would have no opposition. For these reasons, the Maryland Municipal League respectfully requests that this Committee adopted these amendments and provide SB 89 with a favorable report.

1212 West Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

410-268-5514 | 800-492-7121 | FAX: 410-268-7004 | www.md-municipal.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Scott A. Hancock
Angelica Bailey
Bill Jorch
Justin Fiore

Executive Director
Director, Government Relations
Director, Research and Policy Analysis
Manager, Government Relations