



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 11, 2021

Delegate Anne Kaiser, Chair
Maryland House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: HB760 – Information

Delegate Kaiser and Committee Members:

My name is Katherine Berry. I am the Election Director in Carroll County and the co-chair of the Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) Legislative Committee. MAEO represents the local boards of elections throughout the State of Maryland. I am writing today representing myself and MAEO with information and an amendment regarding HB760 – Election Law – Time for Processing Absentee Ballots.

This bill would allow for absentee ballots to be opened, reviewed, and duplicated up to 14 days before the election. Ballot would not be required to be tabulated until 8pm on election day or another time provided by SBE regulations. MAEO would like to respectfully request that the option to begin this process up to **18 days** before the election. In past elections, even the pre-COVID era, some of the large local boards of elections are managing thousands of absentee ballots that would be counted until nearly Thanksgiving. Providing the option of an additional 4 days before the election would assist in their ability to focus on the post-election audits that are required and if any recounts were to occur, they wouldn't have as many absentee ballots to canvass and could begin the recount process more quickly. Furthermore, if the local boards of elections were required to conduct other large scale audits after the election, counting ballots early would benefit all of the offices which are faced with space limitations to run multiple public viewing tasks at the same time.

MAEO would also request that language in the bill specify the definition of "tabulation". In the 2020 election cycle, we were able to open, review, duplicate, scan and tabulate, then embargo the election results. This gave us the ability to have most of the ballots tabulated and able to be released as soon as the polls were closed on election day. We were able to give our voters and candidates a clearer idea of who the projected winners were on election night instead of waiting for the majority of the ballots to be counted in the following days. Offices with close races may find this option particularly helpful.

We are hopeful that you will consider our recommendations and assist us in continuing to be successful election officials in Maryland.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, please contact me at (410)386-2958 or Katherine.berry@maryland.gov.

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