



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: HB895 – 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 opposition to HB895 – Election Law – Polling Places at Continuing Care Communities.

This bill would require local boards of elections (LBEs) to establish separate polling places at retirement communities of 200 or more individuals to specifically serve the residents of the community if the community requests it. The community would be required to provide services and a facility to the local board of elections.

MAEO opposes this bill for the following reasons:

- LBEs are required to meet specific criteria regarding parking, electrical access, ADA compliance and adequate space that many facilities do not have.
- LBEs do not have an infinite amount of voting equipment, supplies and transportation carts to be able to add polling places.
- Facilitating a polling place in a small location such as this will be more costly than the amount of historic turnout percentage.
- LBEs do not have an infinite amount of warehouse space to add more equipment and ancillary items.
- For each new polling place added, this creates an additional ballot style required to be at all early voting centers. Most jurisdictions will be faced with between 100-800 ballot styles required to be in each early voting center already.
- Allowing for a facility to request a polling place allows for other organizations to want to be included in the ability to ask for a polling place; and,
- As experienced in 2020, facilities such as this requested that polling places not be opened in their communities due to COVID-19. This creates a burden on the LBE to make an emergency polling place change for those voters and creates voter confusion and increases in cost of voter notification of the changes.

We continue to strive to make access to the ballot as easy as possible for Maryland voters, but find it imperative that all stakeholders be aware of the challenges we are faced with as it pertains to creation of new polling places. We ask for your unfavorable report regarding HB895.

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