

SB 925 _PGCEX_FAV.pdf

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THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 925 – Prince George's County - Special Elections Conducted by Mail - Voting Centers

SPONSOR: Senator Patterson

HEARING DATE: March 16, 2022

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 925**, which modifies requirements regarding in-person voting centers during a special election conducted by mail in Prince George's County.

Senate Bill 925 provides our County Council with the authority to prescribe the length of in-person voting that would occur during a vote by mail special election in Prince George's County. Under current law if the County Council chooses to conduct a vote by mail Special Election, the County must hold Early Voting for 6 days at a minimum of one vote center for a single district or one vote center per district for a countywide election. There is no flexibility in this provision of the law to reduce the number of voting days if the County sees fit. This bill would authorize the County Council to decide how many voting days will be needed and will not lock the County into having to open voting sites for 6 consecutive days during a vote by mail special election. The bill authorizes the Prince George's County to follow the same laws already in place for Montgomery County.

The Prince George's County Board of Elections recently held a special election to fill a vacancy in one of our Council Districts and due to the timeline required for the election in the county charter, the County Council had no choice but to hold the Special Primary Election over the holiday season, on January 4, 2022, and the Special General Election on February 1st. The County Council approved an election to be conducted by mail, however, there was no flexibility in the law and as a result, early voting was held for six days, beginning on December 27th until January 3rd.

During the six day early voting period for the special primary election less than 200 voters voted early and even few voters voted on Election Day. However, a majority of ballots were received by mail.

There are high costs for keeping the Early Voting Centers open for the Special Primary Election and General Elections, if the County could have reduced the number of days of early voting by 3 days, that would have saved the resources and while allowing residents to vote their preferred method, by mail.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 925** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

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Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700
County Council

POSITION STATEMENT

SB 925
Senator Patterson
(Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs
Committee)

Prince George's County - Special Elections Conducted
by Mail - Voting Centers

POSITION:

SUPPORT

SB 925 – Prince George's County - Special Elections Conducted by Mail - Voting Centers – For the purpose of altering requirements for voting centers used in a special election conducted by mail in Prince George's County. This is to ensure that in a special election held in a single county council district, at least one voting center shall be established in the county council district where the special election is being held; and in a countywide special election, at least one voting center shall be established in each county council district. This would make voting more accessible.

Chapter 677 of 2012 authorized county council special elections in Montgomery County to be conducted by mail, and Chapters 197 and 198 of 2013 expanded those provisions to apply to special elections to fill a vacancy in the office of representative in Congress, special elections to fill a vacancy in a county council, and other specified local special elections statewide. Pursuant to a constitutional amendment (Chapter 261 of 2014) adopted by the voters at the November 2014 general election, special elections for a county executive vacancy may also be conducted by mail. In a special election conducted by mail, a vote by mail ballot is mailed to each registered voter who is eligible to vote in the special election. The completed ballot must be mailed by the voter on or before the day of the special election or returned to the local board of elections office in person by 8:00 p.m. on the day of the special election. As drafted, this legislation would allow Prince George's County to conduct early elections in the same manner as Montgomery County.

These provisions will help support the Board of Elections in their efforts when it comes to ensuring accessibility during all elections held in Prince George's County. Special elections are just as important as any other election and allowing for a window of in-person voting will further support community engagement and fair elections.

For the foregoing reasons, the Prince George's County Council **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 925** and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of this legislation

Prepared by: LA PEREZ CONSULTING
On behalf of the Prince George's County Council

County Administration Building – Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772