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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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**SB163: Ballots - Processing and Reporting Procedures
(Curing & Precinct Reporting)**

**Senate Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee
Wednesday, January 26, 2022 | 1:00 PM**

In the 2020 Presidential Election, [46% of American voters used mail-in or absentee ballots](#). In Maryland, [a whopping 61%](#) chose this method to cast their votes. Despite that, our law does not yet allow Local Boards of Elections (LBEs) to process ballots before Election Day-- significantly delaying the reporting of election results.

SB163 permits LBEs to review the envelopes and to open and scan ballots **eight days** before the start of Early Voting. Too often, people forget to sign the oath on their ballot envelope, potentially nullifying their vote. By reviewing ballots in advance, LBEs can identify this oversight and allow citizens to correct it. Voters must be notified as soon as practicable (*amendment*), but **no later than three business days** after the error is detected. Individuals will have up to **ten days** after Election Day to sign their oath by providing a signature via text, email (*amendment*), online portal, mail, or in-person visit. While it permits processing and scanning of ballots, this bill would **not** allow a local board to tally the votes before the polls close on Election Day.

This legislation also provides clear guidance for counting a ballot if a voter submits both a mail-in and a provisional ballot.

Finally, SB163 requires precinct-level reporting of election results. According to the National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL), all five states with Vote-by-Mail (Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah, and Washington) provide precinct-level reporting. This data helps candidates, political parties, and advocacy organizations to target their time and limited resources. Even more crucially, the data helps identify any anomalies (error, fraud, or voter suppression) in the election results.

I urge a favorable report WITH MY CLARIFYING AMENDMENTS on SB163 to ensure that Marylanders' votes are counted.