



Senate Bill 163

Election Law – Ballots – Processing and Reporting Procedures

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: March 22, 2022

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 163 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill would provide local boards of elections with necessary and reasonable flexibility to canvass mail-in ballots, avoiding administrative complications that could disrupt the timely certification of election results. **MACo believes the bill requires clarifying amendments.**

Current law fails to recognize modern trends in voter preference, capabilities of new technologies, and realities of administering elections in our local communities. As more voters opt to cast mail-in ballots, local boards require flexibility to meet critical certification deadlines and provide meaningful results after the polls close on election day.

State law prohibits local boards from canvassing mail-in ballots until the Wednesday following an election. SB 163 would allow for canvassing of mail-in ballots up to eight days before election day. In addition, the bill prohibits local boards from tabulating mail-in ballots in advance of election day, which safeguards election integrity.

County governments have a vested interest in maintaining fair, open, and transparent elections, and appreciate the bill sponsor's technical amendments to clarify specified definitions and processes.

Granting local boards limited discretion in scheduling the mail-in ballot canvass is a sensible solution to serve and react to community needs. **MACo would be pleased to join local election administrators in working with the Committee to develop bill language that accomplishes these goals reasonably.**

As such, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on SB 163.