



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 327 Elections – Election Judges – Minimum Compensation

POSITION: Favorable

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland is a nonpartisan organization with 1500 members statewide and a mission to educate all voters and expand civic involvement. Our position on Voting Rights and Election Administration calls for a minimum compensation level for election judges to be set by the state. HB 327 specifies such a statewide baseline.

Election judges typically work a 15- or 16-hour day on Election Day, plus mandatory participation at polling place setup the night before, which can take another two hours. The work hours during Early Voting are equally lengthy because legislation enacted in 2021 extended the hours of operation for early voting centers to match the hours of Election Day (7 a.m. to 8 p.m.).

Many election judges sign up because they feel a strong commitment to civic duty and enjoy helping voters. However, recruiting enough judges has become increasingly challenging for local election boards. As we saw in 2020, older and more experienced judges were often reluctant to work in pandemic conditions. Finding, training, and retaining enough people to staff polling places was not easy. This year the need for judges is even greater because more Early Voting centers have been approved and redistricting may result in more precinct polling places.

The proposed minimum compensation for election judges of \$200 per day sets a floor that approximates Maryland's statutory minimum wage of \$12.20 to \$12.50 per hour. Currently, though, several jurisdictions are exempt from paying even this low level.

Our election operations depend on thousands of dedicated citizens working long hours to serve their communities. Ensuring these election workers are paid more fairly is a worthwhile investment.

The League of Women Voters urges a favorable report on HB 327.