

February 8, 2022

**Testimony on HB 327**  
***Elections - Election Judges - Minimum Compensation***  
**Ways and Means**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 327 which would establish minimum daily compensation for Election Judges at \$200 for every voting and early voting day. Our Election Judges play a critical role in our democratic system and should be compensated fairly - ensuring that all Election Judges are paid a minimum of \$200 per day is a step increasing the number of Election Judges recruited and retained across Maryland.

In the past, jurisdictions such as Baltimore City and Montgomery County have had trouble recruiting judges which resulted in long waiting lines on Election Day. Physical distancing due to COVID 19 could make voting lines even longer in future elections. Having an adequate number of Election Judges is crucial. HB 327 would increase the ability to recruit and retain judges.

In the 2020 election, Maryland faced a shortage of 14,000 judges. In an era where elections are being heavily scrutinized, Election Judges are also facing a growing number of election-related intimidation, harassment, and threats. In addition to expanding the number of Election Judges, this policy could also have the effect of having judges returning back to volunteer for future elections.

HB 327 would provide more incentive for people to volunteer for the position but it would also help reduce the high variability of pay across counties. We wanted to point out that many jurisdictions have gone well above the base floor pay proposed by this bill, and with that in mind we urge the General Assembly to consider an amendment increasing base floor pay for all counties to \$275.

**Quick points:**

- Charles County's Chief Judges are paid \$160
- Allegany County's Chief Judges are paid \$225
- Charles County pays its chief judges less, even though Charles County is a larger than Allegany County in terms of population.

HB 327 would help to bring in and retain election judges in Maryland, making the process of voting more convenient and accessible. Recruiting an adequate number of Election Judges means protecting the electoral process for all. For these reasons, we recommend a favorable report.