Montgomery County
Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550   **ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270**

SB 379   **DATE: February 16, 2023**

SPONSOR: Senator Kagan, *et al.*

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Energy, and Environment

CONTACT PERSON: Kathleen Boucher   (kathleen.boucher@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Support

Election Law – Ballots – Processing and Reporting Procedures

State law currently prohibits a local board of elections from starting the canvass of absentee ballot envelopes before 8:00 a.m. on the Wednesday following Election Day. This bill modifies current law to allow the canvassing of absentee ballots to begin eight business days before the first day of early voting. The bill also prohibits a local board or employee of a local board from releasing absentee ballot vote totals before election day.

The bill creates a process that allows a voter to correct a mistake in failing to sign the oath on a ballot envelope or ballot/return envelope before 10:00 a.m. on the 10th day following Election Day. A local board must, as soon as practicable but no later than three days after determining that there was a failure to sign the oath, notify a voter of the mistake, provide an opportunity to correct the omission, and outline the methods that may be used by a voter to communicate with a local board to correct the failure. The bill also establishes procedures to be used in counting absentee and provisional ballots cast by the same individual and expands the current requirement that a local board of elections provide an electronic report of Election-day results by precinct to make it applicable to results for early, absentee, and provisional voting.

Montgomery County believes that it serves the public interest to allow canvassing of absentee ballots as soon as possible, allow voters to correct honest mistakes with signature omissions, ensure accurate counting of absentee and provisional ballots, and make all precinct level results electronically available to the public. The County respectfully requests that the Ways and Means Committee give the bill a favorable report.