



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 10, 2023

Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Maryland House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: HB410 - Support with Amendments

Chair Atterbeary and Committee Members:

My name is Katherine Berry. I am the Election Director in Carroll County and the chair of the Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) Legislative Committee. MAEO represents the local boards of elections throughout the State of Maryland. I am writing today representing MAEO to support HB410 – Election Reform Act of 2023 with amendments.

Current law requires that we provide public notice in advance of any sort of meeting that occurs regarding a polling place change, but as written, this bill would require the local boards of elections to keep a contact list of certain individuals, groups, and elected officials who would like to be notified when a discussion is scheduled to occur regarding changes to polling places. MAEO feels that this could unintentionally lead to other groups or individuals feeling excluded from such notices. Additionally, this could become unmanageable.

Local boards of elections are already required to have polling place changes completed 13 weeks prior to an election. Any changes that would occur after this period would require approval by the State Board of Elections.

Since we already are required to provide public notice, we are supportive of making sure our public notice is posted at least 14 days in advance of the meeting, but we would like to respectfully request that other specifics of who must be notified individually be removed from the bill for the reasons provided above. Local boards of elections are committed to providing public notice of all meetings and working with all of the local stakeholders to post things on social media and websites to make them equally accessible to everyone and this may be more suitable in SBE regulations..

The second component of the bill addresses Public Information Act requests that occur within our offices. MAEO would like to thank Delegate Rosenberg for considering this part of the legislation which would put a hold on requiring the LBEs to respond to PIA requests beginning 90 days prior to an election and through the certification of an election. To be clear, MAEO supports a public process and transparency, but strictly from the perspective of time and staff, we do not have the budgets or personnel to support endless PIA requests during this mission-critical period. We strive to provide as much information as we can, but must be given a reasonable amount of time to professionally and completely fulfill the requests.

We are hopeful that this committee will support this bill and consider our amendment to remove the language about keeping a specific list of people to notify when a public meeting about polling places will occur.. Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, please contact me at (410)386-2958 or Katherine.berry@maryland.gov.