



## House Bill 951

### *Election Law – Election Officials and Workers – Prohibitions Against Interference and Disclosure of Personal Information*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: February 28, 2023

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 951. This bill provides necessary and timely policy changes to protect public servants charged with ensuring fair, open, and transparent elections by extending criminal penalties for doxing election officials and their families. In addition, the bill allows election officials to petition to protect their personal information if releasing the information poses a serious threat to the election official or their immediate families.

Maryland law protects local elected officials who perform their duties – making it a crime for residents to threaten, intimidate, or otherwise impede their public responsibilities. However, unlike some states, Maryland does not extend these protections to other non-elected officials who perform administrative or oversight roles but may suffer the same potentially dangerous feedback from angry residents.

HB 951 prohibits a person from making available on the internet personal information regarding an election official or a member of an election official’s immediate family if the person knows or reasonably should know that the dissemination of the personal information poses an imminent and serious threat to the safety of the election official or a member of an election official’s immediate family. Under the bill, a person who violates the law is guilty of a misdemeanor and, on conviction, is subject to imprisonment not exceeding three years or a fine not exceeding \$2,000 or both.

The bill also authorizes election workers to submit a written request to remove personal information from a public database maintained by the State Department of Assessments and Taxation if the inclusion poses an imminent and serious threat to the election worker or the election worker’s immediate family.

According to a 2022 Brennan Center for Justice poll, election officials are under attack and leaving their jobs. More than half of the respondents expressed concerns about the safety of their colleagues. Nearly one in three knew at least one colleague who quit their job partly or entirely because of safety concerns, increased threats, or intimidation.

HB 951 extends reasonable and necessary protections for local election officials. Accordingly, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 951.