



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 14, 2024

Delegate C. T. Wilson, Chair
Maryland House Economic Matters Committee
Room 231, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

HB261 - Support

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Association of Election Officials strongly supports House Bill 261 Unemployment Insurance - Benefits - Election Judges, a pivotal measure to empower individuals on unemployment benefits to serve as election judges. This role is essential for the integrity and efficiency of our elections, yet recruiting adequate numbers has been a consistent challenge.

One notable hurdle is the reluctance among those receiving unemployment benefits to participate due to concerns over losing their financial support. House Bill 261 addresses this by exempting election judge compensation from being considered as "wages" for unemployment insurance purposes. This crucial adjustment ensures that individuals can contribute to our democracy without risking their benefits.

The implementation of House Bill 261 is expected to significantly increase the pool of potential election judges. This is vital for the smooth functioning of our polling sites, reducing wait times, and ensuring a positive voting experience. A more robust participation in election administration will also strengthen our electoral system by facilitating wider and more inclusive community involvement.

MAEO urges support for House Bill 261, recognizing its potential to enhance civic participation among Maryland's unemployed population and its overall positive impact on our democratic processes.

Sincerely,
John Michael Gudger
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Chair, MAEO Legislative Committee