



Senate Bill 129

Election Law – Election Costs and Administration

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: March 4, 2024

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 129. The bill makes timely and necessary updates to election laws to promote fairness, transparency, and accountability.

An essential function of Maryland’s county governments is to fund and oversee elections. Too often, the State makes unilateral decisions that oblige county funds – with zero local input. Counties, who run elections, should have input on major procurement contracts, as part of a true partnership with the State. Further, State-mandated election expenditures represent significant unfunded mandates on county governments – competing for limited local funds against education, health, public safety, roadway maintenance, and other essential public services.

Under the bill, the State Board of Elections (SBE) must take necessary and appropriate steps to provide transparency and accountability for contracts and procurement decisions, which will afford ample opportunity for input from local governments and Maryland voters. In addition, the bill specifies that an invoice for payment sent to a local board by SBE shall itemize the goods and services and cost of each item.

In addition, the bill properly requires the State to pay 100% of the costs of acquiring and operating the election management system, ballot drop boxes, a marketing campaign to recruit election judges, and a statewide get-out-the-vote campaign – delivering stability and predictability for the State and local budgets.

SB 129 provides necessary and timely policy changes that balance the shared goals of providing fair, open, and transparent elections. Accordingly, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 129.