



# Maryland Association of Election Officials

## Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

March 27, 2024

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

### **HB700 - Information**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee Members,

The Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) Legislative Committee appreciates the opportunity to provide informational testimony on HB700. This bill proposes substantial reforms aimed at improving the recruitment and management of election judges, which are pivotal for the successful execution of elections in Maryland.

### **Youth Engagement**

The bill's provision enabling public school students to both earn service-learning hours and receive compensation for serving as election judges is particularly commendable. By offering such incentives, we encourage youth participation in our democratic processes, fostering a deeper sense of civic responsibility and understanding of the electoral process among young Marylanders. We support the notion that service can be compensated, and this dual benefit not only rightly rewards our young citizens for their contributions but also introduces them to the significance of civic engagement.

### **Standardization of Election Judge Paperwork**

House Bill 700 seeks to make uniform the paperwork for election judges, which currently differs from county to county. The legislation requires the State Board of Elections to establish regulations that standardize and minimize the forms or documentation needed for election judges. While MAEO recognizes the benefits of this approach towards simplification and standardization, it's important to highlight that realizing this goal will require a concerted effort among the State Board of Elections, local boards, and county governments. Given the variety in current practices, achieving standardization will demand thoughtful consideration of the distinct needs and operational realities of local jurisdictions.

### **Needed Definitions**

We also appreciate the bill's effort to clearly define "returning election judge." This definition, identifying a returning election judge as someone who has served a term of office for the immediately preceding presidential or gubernatorial election, provides necessary clarity to the provisions related to bonus payments for returning election judges introduced in 2023's HB1200 / CH0157.

### **Concerns**

MAEO greatly appreciates the intent of this bill, but we do have a couple minor points of concern. Specifically, the proposed enactment date of June 1, 2024, could result in inconsistent rules for calculating bonus pay from the primary to the general election. This inconsistency may cause confusion among judges who were expecting bonus pay for the general election, as the new definitions might change their eligibility. Additionally, MAEO seeks clarification within the bill regarding whether the term "preceding election" encompasses primary elections and if participation in both primary and general elections or only one is a requirement for judges to qualify for the bonus.

MAEO thanks the committee for considering our informational testimony and stands ready to assist in any way we can to enhance the recruitment, retention, and efficient management of election judges in our state.

Sincerely,

John Michael Gudger  
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Chair, MAEO Legislative Committee