



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 6, 2024

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

HB 371 - Information

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and Committee Members:

My name is John Michael Gudger, chair of the Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) Legislative Committee. We recognize the intentions of House Bill 371 to enhance the transparency and integrity of the election process, but we must bring to your attention the practical implications this bill would have on the workload of Local Boards of Elections.

Increased Administrative Responsibilities:

The bill allows petitioners to choose from specified recount methods, including the use of alternative vote tabulating equipment if feasible. This choice necessitates additional administrative work to prepare for each type of recount, ensuring all equipment is ready and compliant. It also requires extensive training for staff to proficiently handle various recount scenarios.

Manual Handling of Voter-Verifiable Paper Records:

The bill's emphasis on the use of voter-verifiable paper records, particularly in manual recounts, will significantly increase the manual labor required. Local boards will need to allocate more staff and resources to handle, store, and count these paper records, especially in larger jurisdictions with a high volume of ballots.

Preservation and Storage of Duplicate Ballots:

Under the new bill, each duplicate ballot and its corresponding voter-verifiable paper record must be preserved and stored together. This requirement adds layers of complexity to our storage and archival processes, demanding additional time, space, and organizational resources. This is a significant burden and could be time-intensive enough that in the case of a recount, an LBE would not be able to comply with the timeframe.

Training and Staffing Needs:

To implement the changes effectively, extensive training for current staff and potentially hiring additional personnel will be necessary. This represents a significant investment in both time and financial resources for Local Boards of Elections across the state.

In conclusion, while the Maryland Association of Election Officials supports measures that enhance the integrity and transparency of our electoral process, it is important for this Committee to consider the practical implications of House Bill 371 on the operations of Local Boards of Elections. We are committed to working with the legislature to find a balanced approach that maintains election integrity while also considering the resource and workload challenges faced by election officials.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this important matter.

Sincerely,

John Michael Gudger
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Chair, MAEO Legislative Committee