



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

January 25, 2024

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

HB164 – 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. I am writing on behalf of MAEO to provide you with information and an amendment regarding HB164 Election Law - Voter Registration List - Absentee Voters (Absentee Ballot Transparency Act of 2024).

MAEO would like to draw attention to certain aspects of the bill that raise privacy concerns and may benefit from further consideration.

Privacy Considerations:

The bill introduces a significant departure from the current law by requiring the State Board of Elections (SBE) or local boards of elections to provide candidates with a list of registered voters who have requested an absentee ballot. The inclusion of email addresses and telephone numbers in these lists raises privacy concerns for voters who submitted contact information under the understanding that it would be for Board of Election inquiries, not available to candidates. I recommend incorporating provisions to notify voters about the sharing of their contact information with candidates, providing an opt-out option for those who wish to keep their contact details private.

Limitations on Candidate Requests:

To mitigate the risk of potential misuse, it may be prudent to consider imposing limitations on the number of times a candidate can request the list. This measure would help ensure responsible use of voter information and prevent excessive or unnecessary requests that could compromise voter privacy.

Emergency Legislation Concerns:

The bill is also presented as emergency legislation, prompting MAEO to express reservations. MAEO contends that any significant alteration with potential impacts on us during an election year should be either opposed or modified to come into effect after the imminent 2024 elections.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am available to provide further insights or answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

John Michael Gudger
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Chair, MAEO Legislative Committee