



Senate Bill 262

Election Law – Special Elections

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 5, 2025

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 262, which provides timely updates to processes for holding special elections to fill county executive and county council vacancies. The bill enables charter counties to tailor special elections to local needs while ensuring compliance with statewide standards for voter accessibility and election integrity.

SB 262 authorizes county councils to determine, via resolution, whether a special election will include a primary or proceed directly to a general election. This approach empowers local leaders to align election practices to their charters and priorities, reducing costs and administrative demands. This flexibility is especially valuable when addressing unexpected vacancies or situations where a primary election may not yield meaningful competition.

The bill also streamlines procedures for vote-by-mail special elections by requiring local boards to mail ballots earlier and permitting the use of secure ballot drop boxes. These updates reflect evolving voter preferences and improve accessibility without imposing undue demands on election officials. Notably, the bill incorporates proper safeguards to ensure special elections uphold high standards for accessibility, integrity, and efficiency.

SB 262 presents a thoughtful and practical solution to modernize local election processes and address emerging challenges. Balancing local flexibility with consistent statewide standards ensures fair, open, and transparent elections while promoting responsive and effective governance.

Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 262.