

Indivisible position on SB337.pdf

Uploaded by: Marna Brown-Krausz

Position: FAV



**Testimony to the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
SB0337- Elections-Local Boards of Elections and Boards of Canvassers-Open
Meeting Requirements (Local Board of Elections Transparency Act)
Bill Sponsor: Senator Kagan**

POSITION: FAVORABLE

By: Marna Brown-Krausz, Defend Democracy Team Member, Indivisible, Howard County

Date: February 26, 2025

On behalf of our 900+ Indivisible Howard County members, I am writing in support of SB 0337. We believe that by providing access to information regarding the decision-making process that governs elections in communities, this bill will encourage civic engagement and restore public trust in the electoral process.

The bill, which adds to section 2-208 of the current Election Law¹, requires each local board to make publicly available on its website, within a designated timeframe, both meeting agenda and summaries of materials the local board will be voting upon. Live video streaming shall also be provided unless that requirement is not applicable in accordance with the Act. Each local board shall also maintain, for a minimum of 5 years after the meeting date, or in the case of the Board of Canvasser, 5 years after the completion of the canvass, a complete and unedited archived video recording of each open meeting or canvass for which the live video streaming was provided.

Indivisible Howard County urges a favorable report on SB 0337.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Similar provisions are proposed for Sections 11-301, -302(a) and -303(a) of the Election Law, regarding the Board of Canvassers, by repeal and reenactment, with amendments.

Testimony on SB 337 - Elections - Local Boards of

Uploaded by: Morgan Drayton

Position: FAV

February 26, 2025

Testimony on SB 337
Elections – Local Boards of Elections and Boards of Canvassers – Open Meeting Requirements
(Local Boards of Elections Transparency Act)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 337, which would significantly increase access to and the efficiency of local Boards of Elections and Boards of Canvassers by making them subject to enhanced Open Meetings Act requirements.

For too many citizens, the work done by State agencies and other public bodies is distant and often undecipherable. Many Marylanders are unable to go to meetings in person, despite having a strongly vested interest in the policies and decisions being made by these agencies. For those who are able attend meetings (whether in-person or online), they often don't have access to meeting materials and are sometimes met with unexpected closed sessions.

SB 337 aims to address this by requiring that meeting agendas and materials be made available online in advance, that meetings be made publicly available by live-stream, and that these streams and meeting materials be archived promptly after a meeting has adjourned.

Streaming video and online access to meeting materials are easy and efficient ways to enhance Marylanders' access to agencies throughout the State. The technology to live-stream is inexpensive, widespread, and better facilitates the participation of all Marylanders. Archiving the streams along with meeting materials and minutes ensures that those who are unable to watch the live-stream will have access to the footage later.

While many of these agencies and public bodies already stream their meetings, these enhanced requirements ensure Marylanders can meaningfully access meetings where the decisions being made will impact them and their communities. It also ensures that members of the public are aware of closed sessions and when they are likely to take place during these meetings. Coverage under the Open Meetings Act puts a clear process in place for dealing with possible violations as members of the public will be able to report complaints to the Open Meetings Law Compliance Board.

SB 337 would vastly increase Marylanders' access to the meetings and meeting materials of Local Boards of Election and Boards of Canvassers. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

MDDC Support SB337.pdf

Uploaded by: Rebecca Snyder

Position: FAV



Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association

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To: Education, Energy & the Environment Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

Date: February 24, 2025

Re: **SB337 - SUPPORT**

The Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Press Association represents a diverse membership of news media organizations, from large metro dailies like the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun, to hometown newspapers such as The Annapolis Capital and the Frederick News Post to publications such as The Daily Record, the Baltimore Times, and online-only publications such as Bethesda Today and Baltimore Brew.

The Press Association is pleased to support SB 337, which brings local Elections Boards and Boards of Canvassers firmly under the Open Meetings Act.

We believe this legislation is an important clarification that will bring more transparency and openness to bodies that have sometimes been shrouded in secrecy. In past years, similar legislation has ensured that various public bodies are subject to the OMA, and this bill continues that trend. Further, we welcome the clarity that these Boards will ensure that any livestreams will be archived in a complete and unedited format for a minimum of five years after the meeting. Journalists rely on meetings of public bodies as central parts of their reporting and our members welcome the clarity of this legislation.

The Press Association urges a favorable report.



**We believe a strong news media is
central to a strong and open society.**

Read local news from around the region at www.mddcnews.com

Testimony - LBE Transparency SB337.pdf

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

CHERYL C. KAGAN
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

—
Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee

—
Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB337: Local Boards of Elections Transparency

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Wednesday, February 26, 2025 1:00 PM

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Local Boards of Elections (LBEs) livestreamed their meetings for public accountability and public safety. Today, only ten still do.¹ Further, there are currently no transparency requirements for how the LBEs conduct their meetings beyond the basic Open Meetings Act-- no specifications about live-streaming or providing materials to the public. Maryland's election processes are fair and secure; inaccessible meetings only open Boards up to doubts and conspiracy theories.

[SB337](#) would simply expand relevant transparency requirements from the State Board of Elections (SBE) to our LBEs. As amended and passed by the House Ways & Means Committee, it would require them to publish their Board meeting agendas, written public testimonies, finalized documents, and all relevant materials on their websites 48 hours before every meeting. LBEs would also need to livestream their meetings and maintain online records for at least five years.

Our Local Boards of Elections should be accountable-- and get credit for the diligent work they do to ensure our elections are carried out safely and impartially for all of Maryland's residents.

I urge a favorable report on SB337 as amended.

¹ Provides meeting livestream: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, and Talbot Counties

No livestream, provides agenda and/or meeting minutes: Allegany, Caroline, Charles, Dorchester, Garrett, Prince George's, Somerset, Washington, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties and Baltimore City

Open meetings, no livestream, agenda, or minutes: St. Mary's and Cecil Counties

No livestream, agenda, minutes, or open meetings (need permission to attend meetings): Queen Anne's County

DRM Testimony - FWA- SB 337 Local Boards of Electi

Uploaded by: Gillian Justice

Position: FWA



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change

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DisabilityRightsMD.org

**EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 26, 2025**

**Senate Bill 337: Elections - Local Boards of Elections and
Boards of Canvassers - Open Meeting Requirements (Local Boards of
Elections Transparency Act)**

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM, formerly Maryland Disability Law Center) is the Protection & Advocacy agency of Maryland, federally mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM works to increase opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities to be part of their communities through voting by advocating for equal and equitable access to the ballot.

DRM supports Senate Bill 337 with a proposed friendly amendment. Senate Bill 337 adds a requirement to current regulations that local boards of election must make meeting agendas and the meetings themselves available to the public in multiple ways: publishing the meeting agenda/documents online, livestreaming the meeting as it occurs, and providing a recording of the meeting on their website.

SB 337 will bolster the public's access to local decision-making about voting. Supporting the access of the public to this process also increases the access of people with disabilities to this information. In particular, the livestreaming of meetings will allow individuals with disabilities flexibility in accessing the information discussed during within the meeting. Increased virtual attendance or viewing options to important local decision-making processes increase the way that people with disabilities can participate in Maryland's political landscape and democracy.

To further strengthen the inclusion of people with disabilities, we propose an amendment to ensure recordings of meetings are available in accessible formats, including captioning, ASL interpretation, and transcripts, so that they are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Written content should be made available in accessible formats that comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. These additions can support our community in accessing information about decisions that may impact local election processes.

SB 337 is a strong bill that increases access to valuable information. With this amendment, SB 337 would more effectively support voters with disabilities and ensure their full participation in Maryland's elections.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 337 with these amendments. Please do not hesitate to contact me at GillianJ@DisabilityRightsMD.org or by phone at 443-692-2498.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gillian Justice
Community Engagement Coordinator
Disability Rights Maryland

SB0337-EEE_MACo_SWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Kinnally

Position: FWA



Senate Bill 337

*Elections - Local Boards of Elections and Boards of Canvassers -
Open Meeting Requirements (Local Boards of Elections Transparency Act)*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 26, 2025

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 337 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill aims to enhance election transparency by requiring local boards of elections and boards of canvassers to live-stream and archive video recordings of open meetings and ballot canvassing sessions.

While counties support expanding public access to election proceedings, MACo urges amendments to address concerns about local election boards' technological capacity, the high cost of necessary upgrades, and the need for flexible, practical implementation.

Many local election boards lack the infrastructure to meet these requirements without costly investments in upgraded hardware, software, and broadband capacity. The bill also mandates that election boards store video recordings for five years, creating data storage and security challenges. Local boards may struggle to implement compliant solutions without dedicated funding.

The governor's fiscal plan shifts significant costs onto counties, who are already responsible for funding the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, infrastructure, public safety, and other essential services. These additional mandates place even greater pressure on local budgets, forcing difficult trade-offs that could undermine core government functions.

Under SB 337 as drafted, counties have no choice but to fund its costs, competing for limited local resources against critical needs like public health, schools, and roadway safety. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to consider the cumulative impact of these obligations and ensure State support for necessary equipment, technology upgrades, and implementation assistance.

Additionally, some local boards report insufficient capability to live-stream directly on their websites. A more practical approach would allow them to use secure, widely accessible digital platforms, with links provided through official county or election board websites. This flexibility could ensure compliance while accommodating local needs and resources.

With reasonable amendments to address technological capacity, cost concerns, and implementation flexibility, counties can effectively meet transparency goals while maintaining essential public services.

For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on SB 337.

SB337 - 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Stephen Feryus

Position: INFO



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 26, 2025

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

SB337 - Information

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) is the professional membership organization representing local election officials and Election Boards across all 24 jurisdictions in Maryland. Our members are committed to ensuring the smooth and effective administration of elections and are deeply dedicated to making Maryland elections accessible, secure, and fair.

MAEO wishes to provide information on Senate Bill 337, which requires the live streaming of all open meetings, including ballot canvasses, by all Local Boards of Elections.

The current practice allows each local board of elections to decide whether to live stream their canvasses based on citizen demand, cost estimates, and practicality. While some counties choose to live stream, others do not. Many local boards rent space for canvassing, often using multiple rooms, and without an integrated system, live streaming may be impractical. Additionally, jurisdictions required to comply with the bill's equipment and data retention requirements may face significant fiscal and logistical challenges. Notably, all jurisdictions currently allow in-person observation, where watchers can ask appropriate staff questions to clarify procedures in real time—an opportunity that would not exist with live streaming alone.

Privacy is another significant concern. Many jurisdictions rely on a combination of contracted and temporary employees, including election judges, to staff Mail-In Ballot and Provisional canvasses. Under this legislation, these individuals would have their likenesses captured and retained as part of the live-streaming requirement. Given recent threats and harassment against election workers, this could create hesitancy among some election judges and staff. The case from the 2020 Presidential Election of Georgia election workers Ruby Freeman and Wandrea' ArShaye Moss illustrates how viewers unfamiliar with election procedures may misinterpret routine processes as nefarious, leading to misinformation and even personal threats.

These concerns may discourage participation among election workers and volunteers, especially if they are concerned about their image being publicly available for extended periods. Additionally, the public availability of live-streamed footage raises concerns about potential misuse, including AI-driven manipulation or selective editing, which could contribute to misinformation and erode public trust in the process.

MAEO supports the move towards even greater transparency and openness regarding our open meetings and canvasses and appreciates your time and consideration of the information provided for Senate Bill 337.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or need further information.