

2025 SB0259 Testimony For 2025-02-05.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: FAV

Testimony For SB0259

Honorable Senators

Please enter a favorable decision for SB0259.

I support

- requiring a local board of elections to submit an election plan to the State Board of Elections for approval at least 7 months before each statewide primary election;
- establishing requirements related to an election plan; and
- altering the requirements related to polling place plans, ballot drop box plans, and early voting center plans.

Alan Lang
45 Marys Mount Road
Harwood, Maryland 20776
Legislative District 30B
410-336-9745
Alanlang1@verizon.net

February 5, 2025

SBE Testimony SB259:HB274.pdf

Uploaded by: Jared DeMarinis

Position: FAV



SB259 – Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee (By Request - Departmental)

Election Law - Local Boards of Elections - Election Plan Requirements

Purpose:

1. Combines three election related plans into one submission for the State Board review and approve.
2. Changes the deadline to submit polling place, early voting and drop box plans to allow for SBE review and potential changes without disputation of the electoral process.
3. Alters the benchmark for precinct polling place locations to redistricting rather than a specific year
4. Clarifies the geographic distribution of early voting centers to a specific number of centers.

Comments:

The State Board of Elections supports the legislation. The proposed bill (1) creates an election plan for a county combining the three existing plans for election administration into one (2) alters the deadline for submission of the election plan to allow greater time for SBE review and potential changes without disputation of the electoral process (3) changes the benchmark of precinct polling place locations and (4) clarifies when geographic distribution of early voting centers should be considered in their designation.

The proposed legislation combines three election related plans, early voting, polling place, and drop box, into one county election plan for the State Board to review and approve. The deadline for the election plan has been moved from 6 months prior to the election to 7 months. The extra month allows for greater review and analysis by the State Board. Additionally, the State Board can receive public comments on the plans. If a plan was rejected and sent back to the local jurisdiction for modification, the timeline for election administration is not disrupted.

The proposed legislation changes the benchmark for precinct polling place locations in the polling place plan from 2018 to the current redistricting year. 2018 is not a correct indicator for locations. Redistricting occurred in 2020 changing precinct boundaries and polling place locations. The intent of the baseline was to ensure that any move or consolidation of polling place locations was justified. Changing the baseline to the first election year after redistricting achieves that legislative intent, rather than choosing an arbitrary date.

Finally, the bill clarifies when the geographic distribution of early voting centers is to be considered by a local board for the placement of early voting centers. Geographic distribution should only occur when a county has 4 or more early voting centers.

Thank you and we look forward to your favorable passage of this bill.

EEE 2/5/2025

Contacts:

Jared DeMarinis, State Administrator of Elections
410-269-2853 or jared.demarinis@maryland.gov

Jennifer McLaughlin, Legislative Liaison and Director of Mail-In Voting
410-410-271-6939 or jennifer.mclaughlin@maryland.gov

Final - SB259 - 2025.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: John Michael Gudger

Position: FAV



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 5, 2025

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

SB259 - Support

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 the state. Our members are dedicated to ensuring the smooth and effective administration of elections, and we are deeply committed to making Maryland elections accessible, secure, and fair.

The Maryland Association of Election Officials supports Senate Bill 259, as it addresses key areas that will improve election administration in Maryland. Specifically, we are in favor of the bill's provision to unlink polling place numbers from the 2018 statewide election and instead base them on the most recent census data. This update will ensure that polling place plans are aligned with the current population distribution, reflecting demographic changes and ensuring better voter access.

Furthermore, the bill's new requirement for local boards to submit one comprehensive election plan—rather than separate plans for polling places, early voting centers, and ballot drop boxes—will streamline the planning process. It provides a more coordinated approach to election logistics, reducing redundancy and ensuring all aspects of the election are considered as a unified whole.

The bill also shifts the timeline by making the plan submission deadline one month earlier. While this change does not provide additional time for local boards to prepare their plans, it does allow for more time between submission and the election for the State Board of Elections (SBE) to review the plans and for local boards to make any necessary adjustments.

We respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 259.

www.maeo.net

DRM Testimony SB 259 FWA Election Plan Requirement

Uploaded by: Gillian Justice

Position: FWA

**SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE**

FEBRUARY 5, 2025

**Senate Bill 259 - Election Law – Local Boards of Elections –
Election Plan Requirements**

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 SB 259 with one suggested friendly amendment. SB 259 seeks to require local boards of elections to submit election plans at least seven months prior to a general election to the State Board of Elections. It also requires a continued review and alteration of the election plan in partnership with the State Board of Elections. The guidelines established by SB 259 set the standard for local boards of election to approach election planning by prioritizing all Marylanders and requires local boards to consistently report back to the State Board regarding both the practical implementation of the election plan and any barriers that may impede progress. These requirements will help safeguard against potential disenfranchisement while keeping the public informed of these continued efforts.

Among other outlined measures that specifically seek to bolster the voting rights of marginalized Marylanders, the bill requires an analysis of available buildings in voting precincts that includes a determination of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) if a local board of election's plan intends to reduce the number of polling locations offered to residents.

DRM proposes a friendly amendment to explicitly name people with disabilities when talking about marginalized groups more consistently within the bill's language. Issues related to physical accessibility are not the only way people with disabilities are marginalized during the voting process.

We request a small amendment to explicitly include people with disabilities in page 3, line 16, which currently states: "ACCESSIBILITY OF THE EARLY VOTING CENTER TO HISTORICALLY DISENFRANCHISED COMMUNITIES [...]". Including people with disabilities in this portion should echo the language used in page 4, regarding drop box planning, starting at line 15: "...the accessibility of the ballot drop box to historically disenfranchised communities, including voters with disabilities[.]" Using consistent language naming people with disabilities as a protected group would provide further clarification and explicit protection for the disability community through a simple change.

SB 259 is a strong bill that requires local government to meet the voting needs of Marylanders with oversight from the State Board of Elections, strengthening the overall protection of residents' voting rights. With the proposed change, we believe this bill could be even stronger for the voting rights of people with disabilities.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 259 with this amendment. 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

SB259 Election Law - Local Board of Elections - EI

Uploaded by: Nikki Tyree

Position: FWA



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE**

SB 259 Election Law - Local Boards of Elections - Election Plan Requirements

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

BY: Linda T. Kohn, President

Date: February 5, 2025

The League of Women Voters of Maryland firmly believes that elections should encourage voter participation, allow minority views and interests to have some influence, and allow all voters to be free of intimidation.

SB 259 seeks to give more time to the State Board of Elections to review the plans of local Boards for early voting centers, polling places, and voting drop boxes. This is critical in order to workshop any problem that could surface and enough time to circumvent any issues before voters begin the election process.

The League fully supports any effort to provide relief to the State Board of Elections and allow them more time to navigate the onslaught of information they must work with. However, during the 2024 elections, LWVMD was dismayed to learn that plans had been approved at centers that turned out to be highly traumatizing to minority voters. These problems had been raised by voters but ignored. While SBE did its best to quickly fix the problems when early voting commenced these problems became all the more clear.

LWVMD is respectfully requesting that two amendments be added to this bill.

1. Local Boards shall be responsible for understanding any current and ongoing practices, events, or materials allowed on the grounds of any proposed early voting centers or polling locations.
2. The local Board shall make every effort to get public input regarding harmful practices of proposed early voting centers, specifically in regard to historically disenfranchised voters, before submitting any plans to the State Board of Elections.

LWVMD urges a favorable report on SB 259 with amendments.