

**SBE Testimony SB262:HB75.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jared DeMarinis

Position: FAV



## **SB262 – Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee (By Request - Departmental)**

### **Election Law – Special Elections**

#### **Purpose:**

1. Changes the time period for conducting a local special election using vote by mail
2. Allows for the State Administrator to change or alter deadlines to meet the special election date
3. Provides enabling legislation for a County Council to hold one election instead of a primary and general
4. Clarifies that specimen ballots are not required to be mailed for a vote by mail election
5. Requires that ballots are mailed no later than 30 days before the special election date
6. Clarifies that drop boxes are permitted

#### **Comments:**

The proposed legislation brings the conduct of a local special election in line with State laws and administrative necessities for conducting a vote by mail election. Local special elections, especially a vote-by-mail, no longer are just a county-specific operation but involve oversight and administration by the State Board of Elections. It requires 90 days to conduct a local election and still meet the requirements of Federal and State deadlines to send out ballots in advance. Furthermore, the bill allows domestic voters more time for ballot delivery. This benefits the voter who misplaces, spoils, or destroys the ballot, and requests a new one.

The legislation enables a county the option to eliminate a special primary election in certain cases. In doing so, the bill has potential cost savings for the county, allows for the vacancy to be filled faster, and could significantly reduce the workload for local election officials. This bill allows for flexibility for each jurisdiction to fill a vacancy in a manner that best represents the needs of its citizens.

Additionally, the bill authorizes the State Administrator oversight authority ensuring that special elections continue to be conducted in a manner consistent with state laws and regulations, even when there are conflicts with county charters or local laws. This provision eliminates any potential conflicts while maintaining the integrity of Maryland's election processes.

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

#### **Contacts:**

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**JARED DeMARINIS, STATE ADMINISTRATOR  
STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

**EEE 2/5/2025**

**Final - SB262 - 2025.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

### **SB262 - Support**

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

The Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO), representing local election officials and Election Boards from all 24 jurisdictions across the state, offers its support for Senate Bill 262. This legislation presents an opportunity to improve the administration of special elections while maintaining the integrity and efficiency of our election processes. We commend the State Board of Elections (SBE) for its initiative in proposing this bill, and we appreciate the legislature's consideration of this important measure.

SB 262 provides counties with the flexibility to determine how vacancies in a county council or executive office should be filled. By allowing counties to forgo a special primary election and proceed directly to a special general election, this bill respects the unique needs and circumstances of individual jurisdictions. Counties can choose between a partisan or nonpartisan approach to special elections, tailoring the process to best suit their voters.

Importantly, SB 262 is not expected to increase the number of special elections. Rather, it offers practical tools for counties to manage these events more effectively. By eliminating the need for a special primary election in certain cases, the bill could significantly reduce the workload for local election officials. This streamlined process would alleviate the administrative burden associated with managing multiple election cycles for a single vacancy, particularly in terms of staffing, ballot preparation, and voter outreach.

The bill also ensures that special elections continue to be conducted in a manner consistent with state laws and regulations, even when there are conflicts with county charters or local laws. This safeguard reinforces the uniformity and integrity of Maryland's election processes and reduces the unique conflicts that can exist with 24 jurisdictions' charters and laws.

SB 262 represents a thoughtful and balanced approach to addressing vacancies in local offices. It upholds the principles of fair and accessible elections while recognizing the operational realities faced by election officials. For these reasons, MAEO urges a favorable report on SB 262.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. We remain committed to supporting legislation that enhances the efficiency, accessibility, and integrity of elections in Maryland.

**SB0262-EEE\_MACo\_SUP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kevin Kinnally

Position: FAV



## **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.

# **SB 0262 - Maryland Forward Party.pdf**

Uploaded by: Philip Benenati

Position: FAV



# Maryland Forward Party

January 31, 2025

## Maryland Forward Party

PJ Benenati, Chair

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### **SB 0262:**

Election Law – Special Elections

Position: Favorable

Dear Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Forward Party and our 6,000 Maryland supporters. Forward Party is among the fastest growing political organizations in the United States and in Maryland. Our organization is dedicated to promoting and enhancing our democracy in Maryland. We also believe that all Maryland taxpayers should have an opportunity to be heard. In Maryland, we have enacted closed primary elections, which currently prohibit over 20% of Maryland taxpayers from participating in primary elections, which is the most broad and often the most important election, particularly in single-party dominated districts. We believe that these principles should also be applied to Special Elections in Maryland.

SB 0262 is pre-filed as an Emergency Bill that allows county councils the ability to not host primary elections for special elections and to only host a general election. The Maryland Forward Party views this Favorably.





# Maryland Forward Party

January 31, 2025

Eliminating a closed primary election for county council and county executive special elections, would dramatically open up access to these elections, access that is otherwise currently closed. It would allow for more competition among candidates, where those candidates are cross-compared to other candidates from the same and other political backgrounds. This would increase the need for these candidates to appeal to a broader audience and would ultimately reduce polarized partisan voting. More choices result in better representation for our communities.

We believe that all voices should be heard in our elections. This means both candidates and Maryland voters. A single general special election would allow all political parties to produce candidates and would also allow all Maryland taxpayers to participate in the vote. By eliminating closed primary special elections, we allow all Marylanders to participate.

Special Elections are expensive. This measure offers a cost effective solution that will reduce the funding cost, so that those funds can be better used in more productive ways in our communities.

This bill also allows for drop boxes to be used in special elections, which will increase access to all members in the community. Dropboxes are safe and reliable mechanisms for voting and should be allowed for Special Elections.

Respectfully

PJ Benenati, Maryland Forward Party, Chair

# **2025 SB0262 Testimony Against 2025-02-05.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: UNF

## Testimony Against SB0262

Honorable Senators

Please enter an unfavorable report about SB0262.

Why would the bill not want the Council to be required to send voters a specimen ballot for the special general election.

We would especially need a specimen ballot if the special election would be run as “non-partisan” without a primary. By having the names in advance, we could better search the Internet for their positions on issues, and for those who are party loyal, no matter what, determine the party affiliation of the “non-partisan” candidates.

Without stating why this bill is an emergency bill and removing the requirement to issue specimen ballots, please enter an unfavorable report about SB0262.

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February 5, 2025