



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 2, 2025

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

HB317 - Information Only

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, 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.

Acknowledgement of Improvement

MAEO acknowledges that this legislation has considerably improved since its iteration last year. Scaling the bill back to be a pilot program for three representative counties would reduce the fiscal impact on the state while enabling election officials to evaluate implementation challenges, assess voter accessibility, and determine the necessary resources for a potential statewide expansion. A phased approach would also provide lawmakers with data on costs, equipment needs, and best practices before making a broader commitment. Additionally, MAEO appreciates the inclusion of new no-electioneering zones in HB 317, as they help protect voters from undue influence while participating in curbside voting. Ensuring a clear, intimidation-free environment is essential to maintaining voter confidence and the integrity of the election process.

Concerns Regarding Technology Compatibility

A significant challenge we face is the lack of compatible technology to efficiently implement curbside voting. Our current ballot marking devices (BMDs) and pollbook printers, while standardized across the state, **are not designed for outdoor or mobile use**. Unlike the more compact, modern systems used in other states to facilitate curbside voting, our equipment requires substantial logistical adjustments and potential additional investments in new technology to function effectively in this capacity. Additionally, we may need to renegotiate our equipment leases to permit outdoor use.

Unless this bill is tied to a future procurement process that ensures the acquisition of mobile, weather-resistant ballot marking devices and pollbooks, local election officials will face significant operational hurdles. Without appropriate equipment, election staff will be forced to implement costly and inefficient workarounds, increasing the risk of delays, errors, equipment damage and security concerns. Additionally, any new technology must undergo rigorous testing and certification to ensure compliance with state and federal election security standards.

Election Security, Ballot Integrity and Voter Perception of Security

The prospect of managing loose ballots outside our established zone of control presents a critical concern from an election security standpoint. Maintaining the integrity and secrecy of each vote is paramount, and the transition to curbside voting introduces new vulnerabilities that must be meticulously addressed to prevent any compromise in our electoral process. Beyond the logistical challenges, voter perception of security plays a crucial role in public confidence. Any perceived weaknesses—such as ballots being marked or transferred outside a secure polling environment—could undermine trust in the system, regardless of actual security measures in place.

Weather and Space Considerations

The weather variability, particularly during primary and general election seasons, poses an additional operational challenge to curbside voting. Ensuring the safety and comfort of voters and election workers, as well as protecting voting equipment from adverse weather conditions, requires careful planning and additional resources.

In conclusion, while we support efforts to enhance voter accessibility, it is imperative that we address our technical limitations and proceed with caution to safeguard the integrity of our electoral process. Thank you for considering our informational only testimony on this important matter. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out.