



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 4, 2025

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

HB0412 - Information

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.

MAEO wishes to provide information on House Bill 412, 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 House Bill 412.

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