



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 18, 2025

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

HB839 - Information

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 to making Maryland elections accessible, secure, and fair. MAEO appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 839, which would allow certain provisional ballots cast due to party affiliation discrepancies to be partially counted for nonpartisan Board of Education contests.

Under current Maryland election law, voters who believe their party affiliation does not reflect the ballot they wish to vote in a primary election must cast a provisional ballot. This ballot would currently be rejected in full because party affiliation determines eligibility to cast a particular party ballot.

HB 839 proposes allowing local boards to count votes in nonpartisan Board of Education contests on these otherwise fully rejected ballots while still excluding votes cast in partisan contests. While this change ensures more eligible votes are counted, it also introduces additional complexity in provisional ballot processing, requiring extra verification steps, ballot separation, duplication, and manual review—adding to the workload of election officials navigating tight post-election deadlines.

Despite the increased administrative burden, MAEO supports efforts that align with the principle that every vote that should count must count. We appreciate this movement toward a more inclusive electoral process, ensuring that voters participating in nonpartisan contests are not inadvertently disenfranchised due to an issue that affects only their ability to vote in partisan races. However, we urge the General Assembly to consider the resource implications of this change and to work with State Board of Elections officials to ensure sufficient training, staffing, and technological support for proper implementation.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you to uphold the integrity and accessibility of Maryland's elections.