



House Bill 412

*Elections - Local Boards of Elections and Boards of Canvassers -
Open Meeting Requirements (Local Boards of Elections Transparency Act)*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means Committee

WITH AMENDMENTS

Date: February 4, 2025

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 412 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill aims to enhance election transparency by requiring local boards of elections and boards of canvassers to live-stream and archive video recordings of open meetings and ballot canvassing sessions.

While counties support expanding public access to election proceedings, MACo urges amendments to address concerns about local election boards' technological capacity, the high cost of necessary upgrades, and the need for flexible, practical implementation.

Many local election boards lack the infrastructure to meet these requirements without costly investments in upgraded hardware, software, and broadband capacity. The bill also mandates that election boards store video recordings for five years, creating data storage and security challenges. Local boards may struggle to implement compliant solutions without dedicated funding.

The governor's fiscal plan shifts significant costs onto counties, who are already responsible for funding the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, infrastructure, public safety, and other essential services. These additional mandates place even greater pressure on local budgets, forcing difficult trade-offs that could undermine core government functions.

Under HB 412 as drafted, counties have no choice but to fund its costs, competing for limited local resources against critical needs like public health, schools, and roadway safety. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to consider the cumulative impact of these obligations and ensure State support for necessary equipment, technology upgrades, and implementation assistance.

Additionally, some local boards report insufficient capability to live-stream directly on their websites. A more practical approach would allow them to use secure, widely accessible digital platforms, with links provided through official county or election board websites. This flexibility could ensure compliance while accommodating local needs and resources.

With reasonable amendments to address technological capacity, cost concerns, and implementation flexibility, counties can effectively meet transparency goals while maintaining essential public services.

For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 412.