



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 274 Election Law - Local Boards of Elections - Election Plan Requirements

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

BY: Linda T. Kohn, President

Date: January 21, 2025

The League of Women Voters of Maryland firmly believes that elections should encourage voter participation, allow minority views and interests to have some influence, and allow all voters to be free of intimidation.

HB 274 seeks to give more time to the State Board of Elections to review the plans of local Boards for early voting centers, polling places, and voting drop boxes. This is critical in order to workshop any problem that could surface and enough time to circumvent any issues before voters begin the election process.

The League fully supports any effort to provide relief to the State Board of Elections and allow them more time to navigate the onslaught of information they must work with. However, during the 2024 elections, LWVMD was dismayed to learn that plans had been approved at centers that turned out to be highly traumatizing to minority voters. These problems had been raised by voters but ignored. While SBE did its best to quickly fix the problems when early voting commenced these problems became all the more clear.

LWVMD is respectfully requesting that two amendments be added to this bill.

1. Local Boards shall be responsible for understanding any current and ongoing practices, events, or materials allowed on the grounds of any proposed early voting centers or polling locations.
2. The local Board shall make every effort to get public input regarding harmful practices of proposed early voting centers, specifically in regard to historically disenfranchised voters, before submitting any plans to the State Board of Elections.

LWVMD urges a favorable report on HB 274 with amendments.