



# Maryland Association of Election Officials

## Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 11, 2025

Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair  
Ways and Means Committee  
131 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

### **HB642 - 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 the state. Our members are dedicated to ensuring the effective administration of elections, and we are deeply committed to making Maryland elections accessible, secure, and fair.

MAEO appreciates the intent behind House Bill 642; to relax the name standards for petition signature verification, to introduce electronic signatures to the law (post COVID), to allow a voter to correct their invalidated signature in a time frame relevant to the petition submission deadline, and to make copies of completed petitions available to the circulating entity in a timely fashion. We wish to inform your decision concerning this bill by conveying how it might impact our current standard.

The name standard portion of HB642 will surely allow more signatures to be counted by allowing voters to use a derivative of their first name, as they sometimes do, and focusing more on the surname when attempting to verify signatures; however, any expansion of signature verification standards should be accompanied by resources for technology and training.

In 2020, the Maryland State Board of Elections allowed electronic signatures due to the COVID pandemic. While the petition signatures provided more accurate information, signature verification was based on the current name standards provided by Election law during a unique and difficult time. If electronic signatures are to be permanently allowed, the law should specify whether these must be handwritten (e.g., through signature pads or scanned copies) rather than typed to ensure consistency with signature verification practices.

HB642 also seeks to allow a voter to correct their petition signature if they are notified of any deficiencies. It would put undue burden on Election Officials to be held responsible for contacting these voters individually to inform them their petition signature is insufficient. Ensuring the circulator is obligated to inform the signer of any issues will remove that burden while allowing voters an opportunity to correct their signatures.

Finally, HB642 seeks to make copies of the petition pages available as soon as one business day after the Chief Election Official verifies the signatures. While we understand the intent behind this provision, the practicality of such a rapid turnaround depends heavily on the size of the petition and the timing of the request. Large petitions could require a significant amount of time to copy and process, which may divert staff from other essential election duties, increase the risk of errors or necessitate additional overtime.

MAEO remains committed to facilitating accessible elections and appreciates the opportunity to provide information on election administration considerations related to this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.