

2025 HB0412 Testimony For 2025-02-04.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: FAV

Testimony For HB0412

Honorable Delegates

Please enter a favorable decision for HB0412.

I support:

- Requiring each local board of canvassers to make available on its website
 - each open meeting agenda,
 - a summary of any finalized documents,
 - certain written testimony, and
 - other materials on which the board will be voting;
- requiring each local board to
 - provide live video streaming of each open meeting and
 - maintain a complete and unedited archived video recording of each open meeting for 5 years; and
- requiring the State Board of Elections to adopt regulations to ensure that the streaming requirements are met

It would have been informative if there had been an estimate of the costs for these boards to implement the changes.

Alan Lang
45 Marys Mount Road
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Legislative District 30B
410-336-9745
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February 4, 2025

Letter of Support for the Local Boards of Election

Uploaded by: Cassandra Okwumabua

Position: FAV

To: Senator Kagan and Delegate Korman

From: Cassandra Okwumabua, Member, Calvert County Board of Elections

Subject: Letter of Support for the Local Boards of Election Transparency Act

Dear Senator Kagan and Delegate Korman,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Local Boards of Election Transparency Act, a crucial legislation that will significantly benefit the citizens of Calvert County and local Boards of Elections across the state, enhancing their trust and confidence in the electoral process.

Our community is increasingly vocal about the need for greater transparency in local election board meetings. This demand is evident in the numerous requests for these meetings to be recorded, a request that is consistently voiced during the open comment period after our business meetings. Residents often question why these meetings are not recorded when numerous other county meetings are. Moreover, many individuals are unable to attend due to work commitments, long commutes, or the need to take leave to participate via Zoom while teleworking.

This bill will ensure that citizens have the same level of access and engagement as they do with other recorded county meetings. The Board of County Commissioners, Board of Appeals, Calvert County Planning Commission, Community Resources, Planning and Zoning, Police Accountability Board, Office on Aging, and Technology Services, among others, already provide recorded meetings that are made available on the County's Video on Demand page, administered by Communications & Media Relations – Calvert Broadcast. Our local Board of Elections should be afforded the same level of transparency and accessibility.

Additionally, the State Board of Elections already records and archives its meetings, providing public access to past board meetings, agendas, and minutes dating back to January 25, 2017. This precedent further underscores the importance of making election-related discussions available to the public at the state and local levels.

It's worth noting that the Calvert County Board of Elections has recently taken a positive step by approving the posting of its approved minutes on its website, starting with the June 26, 2024, minutes. While this is a commendable move, recorded meetings would further enhance accessibility, civic engagement, and public trust in the electoral process.

I want to express my sincere gratitude for your sponsorship of this critical legislation and your unwavering commitment to transparency and accountability. Your leadership in ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to stay informed and engaged with their local Boards of Elections is truly commendable.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Okwumabua

Member, Calvert County Board of Elections

Letter of Support for the Local Boards of Election

Uploaded by: Cassandra Okwumabua

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Sincerely,

Cassandra Okwumabua

Member, Calvert County Board of Elections

LWVCC Letter of Support (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Cassandra Okwumabua

Position: FAV



January 30, 2025

RE: SB 337/HB 0142

The League of Women Voters has consistently sought transparency in government across all agencies and boards in an effort to promote citizen awareness of government activities and decisions.

To this end, **we strongly support SB 337/HB 0142** that would require local Boards of Election to record, archive, and make available their meeting agendas and minutes for a specified period of time.

We would appreciate your support of this important tool for citizen awareness.

Sincerely,

Sandra Raviv and Gladys White
LWVCC Co-Presidents

HB 412 Del Korman Fav.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Marc Korman

Position: FAV

MARC KORMAN
Legislative District 16
Montgomery County

Chair
Environment and Transportation
Committee

Rules and Executive
Nominations Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Local Board of Elections Transparency Act (HB 412)

Testimony of Delegate Marc Korman- Favorable

Thank you Madame Chair, Madame Vice Chair, and members of the Ways and Means Committee. I come before you today to discuss the Local Board of Elections Transparency Act (HB 412). This is an important next step in our continuing efforts to bring transparency and accessibility to our election process.

This bill serves to increase transparency among local boards of elections and boards of canvassers by expanding streaming and archival requirements. Local boards would be required to publish their agendas, written public testimonies, finalized documents, and all relevant materials on their websites 48 hours before every meeting. For all open meetings, local boards must livestream meetings; and then publish and maintain an archive of at least five years' worth of unedited footage. Board of canvassers must also livestream the canvass while maintaining an archive of at least five years' worth of unedited footage.

The bill has the potential to increase citizens' engagement with their local boards of elections and canvassers. Currently, 10 counties provide live streams of their board of elections meetings. Howard County, for example, provides its constituents with live streams and the accompanying meeting agenda and minutes on the county website. The streaming of meetings was typical during the height of COVID, when many currently streaming local boards adopted the practice.

The expansions will align local requirements with state standards. The State Board of Elections has live streamed and maintained the records of its meeting livestreams, agendas, minutes, and related materials for over five years as a result of legislation the General Assembly passed.¹ This legislation would require all local boards to follow this action that already occurs across the state and at the state level.

The Local Board of Elections Transparency Act will increase the accessibility of local boards of elections and provide a means for citizens to better remain informed about their local elections.

¹ <https://elections.maryland.gov/about/board.html>

HB 412 Facts Sheet .docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Marc Korman

Position: FAV



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Facts Sheet - Local Board of Elections Transparency Act (HB 412)

Summary

The bill required local boards of elections and boards of canvassers to livestream their meetings and make the livestreams accessible to the public in an archive.

What are the current requirements for Local Boards of Election?

The current state code has **no transparency requirements** for how the local board of elections conducts their meetings beyond the basic Open Meetings Act. There are no specifications about the materials that must be provided to the public. There are also no requirements for live-streaming meetings. All local boards do provide information in some form whether through distributing agendas or livestreams, but it is not legally required.

Local State Boards:

Provide a livestream (10) : Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Calvert County, Carroll County, Frederick County, Harford County, Howard County, Kent County, Montgomery County, Talbot County

No livestream (11) – Provide Agenda and/or Meeting Minutes: Caroline County, Baltimore City, Allegany County, Charles County, Dorchester County, Garrett County, Prince George's County, Somerset County, Washington County, Wicomico County, Worcester County

No livestream, agenda, or minutes (2) – Host open meeting: St. Mary's County, Cecil County

No livestream, agenda, minutes, or open minutes (1) – Semi- Open Meetings (Must receive permission to attend meetings) – Queen Anne's County

What are the current requirements for Board of Canvassers?

Every board of canvassers must meet in **public sessions**. These sessions can be observed by approved observers and members of the general public.

Counties with Available 2024 election Board of Canvassers Live streams:

Baltimore County, Cecil County, and Montgomery County

What are the requirements for the State Board of Election?

The State Board of Elections must livestream their open meetings and provide the agenda, minutes, and any relevant documents prior to the meeting. All live streams are stored in an available archive containing over 5 years of material.

HB412--~1.PDF

Uploaded by: Morgan Drayton

Position: FAV

January 31, 2025

Testimony on HB 412
Elections – Local Boards of Elections and Boards of Canvassers – Open Meeting Requirements
(Local Board of Elections Transparency Act)
Ways & Means

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 412, which would significantly increase access to and the efficiency of local Boards of Elections and Boards of Canvassers by making them subject to enhanced Open Meetings Act requirements.

For too many citizens, the work done by State agencies and other public bodies is distant and often undecipherable. Many Marylanders are unable to go to meetings in person, despite having a strongly vested interest in the policies and decisions being made by these agencies. For those who are able attend meetings (whether in-person or online), they often don't have access to meeting materials and are sometimes met with unexpected closed sessions.

HB 412 aims to address this by requiring that meeting agendas and materials be made available online in advance, that meetings be made publicly available by live-stream, and that these streams and meeting materials be archived promptly after a meeting has adjourned.

Streaming video and online access to meeting materials are easy and efficient ways to enhance Marylanders' access to agencies throughout the State. The technology to live-stream is inexpensive, widespread, and better facilitates the participation of all Marylanders. Archiving the streams along with meeting materials and minutes ensures that those who are unable to watch the live-stream will have access to the footage later.

While many of these agencies and public bodies already stream their meetings, these enhanced requirements ensure Marylanders can meaningfully access meetings where the decisions being made will impact them and their communities. It also ensures that members of the public are aware of closed sessions and when they are likely to take place during these meetings. Coverage under the Open Meetings Act puts a clear process in place for dealing with possible violations as members of the public will be able to report complaints to the Open Meetings Law Compliance Board.

HB 412 would vastly increase Marylanders' access to the meetings and meeting materials of Local Boards of Election and Boards of Canvassers. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

2-4-25 HB 412 Elections - Local Boards of Election

Uploaded by: Nancy Soreng

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 412 Elections - Local Boards of Elections and Boards of Canvassers - Open Meeting Requirements (Local Boards of Elections Transparency Act)

Position: Support

By: LINDA KOHN, President

Date: February 4, 2025

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible. This bill also requires each local board to provide live video streaming of each open meeting and to maintain a complete and unedited archived video which is state of the art practice for transparency of public bodies.

Over the years, the League of Women Voters has been proud to support numerous pieces of legislation that advanced transparency in many of our state agencies by codifying measure such as those named above. During the special circumstances of the Covid 19 pandemic, local Boards of Elections live-streamed their canvasses and meetings to assure the public that they are following procedures designed to result in fair and accurate elections. This bill would require them to continue this practice.

It is essential that the public have faith in our election processes. Allowing public scrutiny of the decision-making and canvassing procedures of Local Boards of Election will assure voters that Maryland's election officials are acting in their best interest and help to undermine the conspiracy theories and misinformation about elections that unfortunately is all too common today.

We urge a favorable report on HB 412.



MDDC Support HB412.pdf

Uploaded by: Rebecca Snyder

Position: FAV



Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association

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www.mddcpres.com

To: Ways and Means Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

Date: February 4, 2025

Re: **HB 412 - SUPPORT**

The Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Press Association represents a diverse membership of news media organizations, from large metro dailies like the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun, to hometown newspapers such as The Annapolis Capital and the Frederick News Post to publications such as The Daily Record, the Baltimore Times, and online-only publications such as Bethesda Today and Baltimore Brew.

The Press Association is pleased to support HB 412, which brings local Elections Boards and Boards of Canvassers firmly under the Open Meetings Act.

We believe this legislation is an important clarification that will bring more transparency and openness to bodies that have sometimes been shrouded in secrecy. In past years, similar legislation has ensured that various public bodies are subject to the OMA, and this bill continues that trend. Further, we welcome the clarity that these Boards will ensure that any livestreams will be archived in a complete and unedited format for a minimum of five years after the meeting. Journalists rely on meetings of public bodies as central parts of their reporting and our members welcome the clarity of this legislation.

The Press Association urges a favorable report.



**We believe a strong news media is
central to a strong and open society.**

Read local news from around the region at www.mddcnews.com

DRM Testimony - FWA- HB 412 Local Boards of Electi

Uploaded by: Gillian Justice

Position: FWA



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change

1500 Union Ave., Suite 2000, Baltimore, MD 21211

Phone: 410-727-6352 | Fax: 410-727-6389

DisabilityRightsMD.org

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 04, 2025

House Bill 412: Elections - Local Boards of Elections and Boards of Canvassers - Open Meeting Requirements (Local Boards of Elections Transparency Act)

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM, formerly Maryland Disability Law Center) is the Protection & Advocacy agency of Maryland, federally mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM works to increase opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities to be part of their communities through voting by advocating for equal and equitable access to the ballot.

DRM supports House Bill 412 with a proposed friendly amendment. House Bill 412 adds a requirement to current regulations that local boards of election must make meeting agendas and the meetings themselves available to the public in multiple ways: publishing the meeting agenda/documents online, livestreaming the meeting as it occurs, and providing a recording of the meeting on their website.

HB 412 will bolster the public's access to local decision-making about voting. Supporting the access of the public to this process also increases the access of people with disabilities to this information. In particular, the livestreaming of meetings will allow individuals with disabilities flexibility in accessing the information discussed during the meeting. Increased virtual attendance or viewing options to important local decision-making processes increases the ways that people with disabilities can participate in Maryland's political landscape and democracy.

To further strengthen the inclusion of people with disabilities, we propose an amendment to ensure recordings of meetings are available in accessible formats, including captioning, ASL interpretation, and transcripts, so that they are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Written content should be made available in accessible formats that comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. These additions can support individuals with disabilities in accessing information about decisions that may impact local election processes.

HB 412 is a strong bill that increases access to valuable information. With this amendment, HB 412 would more effectively support voters with disabilities and ensure their full participation in Maryland's elections.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 412 with these amendments. Please do not hesitate to contact me at GillianJ@DisabilityRightsMD.org or by phone at 443-692-2498.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gillian Justice
Community Engagement Coordinator
Disability Rights Maryland

HB0412-WM_MACo_SWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Kinnally

Position: FWA



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.

Final - HB0412 - 2025.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: John Michael Gudger

Position: INFO



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.