



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

HB 357 Municipalities – Election Dates – Reporting Requirements

POSITION: Favorable

By: Linda Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) supports an open, representative, and accountable government. **We promote electoral practices that maximize voter participation and clearly reflect voter intent. Every election matters—federal, state, county, and municipal alike.**

Municipal elections are not governed by state or county Boards of Election, and they set their own procedures and processes, including election timing. While the Boards of Election provide municipalities with poll book information and ultimately receive election results, they are not even aware of election dates, deadlines, and polling locations. As a result, these elections are often held at odd times, receive little media coverage, and suffer from low turnout and public awareness. Many voters are unaware when local elections occur or how much is at stake—an impact felt most acutely by marginalized communities.

This disparity in practice became clearer in last year's election. While Maryland did not participate in statewide elections, several municipalities held their own elections. LWVMD alone received multiple calls from voters across the state asking why their polling places were not open, where they were meant to vote, and to report issues. Voters were forced to Google the dates, and some reported that they were not listed on the website.

HB 357 does not diminish municipal independence. Instead, it ensures voters receive reasonable notice of regular and special elections and requires timely reporting of results to the State Board of Elections.

For these reasons, the League urges a favorable report on HB 357.

<https://www.nonprofitvote.org/local-elections-small-margins-big-consequences/>