

JULIE PALAKOVICH CARR
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Ways and Means Committee
Chair, Revenues Subcommittee

Chair, Montgomery County
House Delegation



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 202
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3037
800-492-7122 Ext. 3037
Julie.PalakovichCarr@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 357
Municipalities – Election Dates – Reporting Requirements**

The 157 municipalities in Maryland run their elections independently, including by setting their own election dates that don't necessarily align with state primary and general elections. Many Maryland municipal elections are held 'off cycle' in an odd numbered year. This bill will make it easier for the public to know when municipal elections are happening in their community.

Low voter turnout is a problem that consistently plagues municipal elections. Recent local elections in Maryland illustrate this challenge. In 2025, Maryland municipal voter turnout ranged from a low of 6.2 percent to a high of 84.4 percent (for a very contentious ballot referendum).¹ Voter turnout in many towns was in the single digits or teens. By comparison, participation in statewide elections is substantially higher. In the 2024 cycle, about 28 percent of eligible voters participated in the primary election² and 72 percent in the general election.³

One potential cause of low voter turnout is unawareness of the upcoming election. Currently, there is no centralized, easily accessible information source where voters, potential candidates, or the media can find a complete list of upcoming municipal election dates. Municipalities are not currently required to share their election dates with the State Board of Elections.

HB 357 addresses this gap by requiring municipalities post the date of their next regularly scheduled election on their website (if they have one)⁴ and to the State Board of Elections to be posted on its website.

My office checked a random sample of websites for Maryland's 157 municipalities for forthcoming election date information. Of the 21 municipalities we checked, only four

¹ https://elections.maryland.gov/voting/municipal_results.html

² [Maryland primary election turnout](#)

³ [Maryland general election turnout](#)

⁴ 20 municipalities do not have a website

published information about future elections on a publicly searchable website.⁵ And of those four towns, only one town states the actual date of the next election (as opposed to more generic language such as “the first Monday in October in an even year”), as well as the offices that will be on the ballot.

After conversations with the Maryland Municipal League, the State Board of Elections, and the Maryland Association of Election Officials, the bill was amended in the House to address their concerns about compliance. As amended, the bill builds on legislation enacted in 2023 that requires municipalities to report their election results directly to the State Board. The simplified reporting requirements in the amendment require the municipality to report their next election date along with their election results. This alleviates municipalities from having to remember to make a second report to the State Board.

HB 357 takes a practical step toward increasing voter awareness of municipal elections and unanimously passed the House. Making these dates easier to find will reduce barriers to voter participation.

⁵ We did not count information contained in a town charter as meeting this criteria, as it’s unlikely that a typical resident would think to check in the town charter.