

SB0670 – Election Law – Local Board of Elections E

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY

SB0670 – Election Law – Local Board of Elections Employees Authority at Polling Places

Bill Sponsor: Senator Kagan

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, Co-Chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in support of **SB0670** on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists—individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

SB0670 clarifies and strengthens the authority of local board of elections employees at polling places by giving local election board employees authority over on duty police officers. Election workers are the backbone of Maryland’s voting system, and they must have clear, consistent authority to maintain order, ensure compliance with election law, and protect voters’ rights. This bill provides the structure needed to support election workers in carrying out their responsibilities safely and effectively.

At a time when national rhetoric has suggested deploying a harassing police presence at polling places, it is essential that Maryland take steps to prevent any force that would counter our efforts to keep voters safe and fully informed. By clarifying the authority of local board employees, SB0670 strengthens the orderly, professional environment that voters need to participate freely and confidently.

Because a core part of our mission is to inform voters about legislation and their legislators, we must ensure that Marylanders can engage in the democratic process without intimidation. Therefore, we respectfully urge a **FAVORABLE** report on SB0670.

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Uploaded by: Erin Perrone

Position: FAV



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 25, 2026

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SB670 - Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, 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 smooth and effective administration of elections, and we are deeply committed to making Maryland elections accessible, secure, and fair.

The Maryland Association of Election Officials supports Senate Bill 670. Currently, Maryland law grants specific authorities, such as keeping the peace, ordering arrests for interference, and managing challengers and watchers, primarily to election judges. However, in practice, local board of elections (LBEs) staff and directors are often the "experts in the room" who are dispatched to voting locations to resolve complex disputes and unmanageable situations.

SB 670 provides these professionally trained, non-partisan administrators with the same legal standing as election judges to:

- **Maintain Order:** Keep the peace and, if necessary, order the arrest of individuals who breach the peace or interfere with the election process.
- **Manage Observers:** Protect the rights of accredited challengers and watchers while also having the authority to deny admission or eject individuals who violate voting location regulations.
- **Ensure Timely Openings:** Require observers to leave or restrict admission if their presence prevents the voting location from opening on time.

Local board employees are career administrators mandated by law to prioritize the public interest over partisan concerns. By granting these officials the authority to act independently of an election judge, the bill streamlines polling place operations, particularly when a chief judge is absent or reluctant to make a difficult enforcement decision due to fear of harassment or litigation.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of Election Officials respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 670.

2-25-2026 SB 670, ELECTION LAW—Local Board of Elec

Uploaded by: Linda Kohn

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

SB 670, ELECTION LAW—Local Board of Election Employees—Authority at Polling Places

POSITION: Support

FROM: Linda Kohn, President

DATE: February 25, 2026

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote and that all citizens should be encouraged to vote. We support SB 670 because it can help protect that right by ensuring that voters can cast their ballots free from harassment or provocation.

Maryland law allows for election challengers and watchers to be present in a polling place, but it is also inappropriate for challengers or watchers to interfere with elections. While election judges are trained in how to handle a situation with a challenger or watcher, this bill would add protections by offering local Board of Election employees additional authorities to intervene if needed to maintain peace in a polling place. Additional clarity around what constitutes “interference” would be beneficial for all involved—challengers and watchers, employees and election judges, and voters.

This bill strikes a careful balance between allowing the presence of challengers and watchers to ensure transparency but also making sure that local Board of Election employees have the authorities needed to maintain accessible and peaceful elections for the voters.

For these reasons, LWVMD urges a favorable report on SB 670.

Testimony in support of SB0670 - Local BofE Employ

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0670_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

02/25/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#0670- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Election Law - Local Board of Elections Employees - Authority at Polling Places

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0670, **Election Law - Local Board of Elections Employees - Authority at Polling Places**

Based on new pronouncements by the Federal Administration figures, *American Oversight Investigating Potential Trump Administration Plans to Deploy Military, ICE at Polling Places*¹

“The presence of law enforcement or military personnel at polling places risks chilling voter participation and undermining public confidence in the integrity of our elections — perhaps that is what President Trump is counting on,” said Chioma Chukwu, Executive Director of American Oversight. “The possibility that this kind of government power might be used to threaten voters exercising their constitutional rights demands scrutiny. Rather than stoke fears of political intimidation, the administration should strengthen trust in our democracy and address the real crises affecting people’s lives.”

This bill will give Maryland tools to combat these unconstitutional actions should their be any attempts by anyone to try and influence elections by intimidation and interference with voters.

This bill will require a police officer who is on duty at a polling place to obey the authority of a local board of elections employee; providing that local board employees, while serving a polling place, have the authority to keep the peace and order the arrest of certain persons; and authorizing local board employees, while serving in a polling place, to protect certain rights of, deny admission of, and eject certain challengers and watchers from a polling place under certain circumstances; etc.

This bill will give our polling place volunteers tools to combat these tactics and have those who would use them arrested for their interference with our elections.

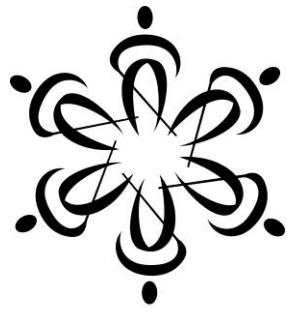
I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0670.

¹ <https://americanoversight.org/american-oversight-investigating-potential-trump-administration-plans-to-deploy-military-ice-at-polling-places/>

2-25-2026 Favorable SB0670 Authority at Polling PI

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV



NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF THE BLIND
MARYLAND

Live the life you want.

From: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201 president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee to give a favorable report to SB0670. This bill gives the authority to regulate behavior in the polling places to local board employees rather than to a local police officer. Local election employees will know more than the police officer about whether the voters or people watching over the elections are obeying the rules. The election officials undergo specialized training and are closer to the situation, making a better evaluation.

Persons with disabilities, including the blind, may wish to use the Ballot Marking Device rather than writing on a paper ballot. Sometimes, misunderstandings arise because the Ballot Marking Device has not been properly set up for use. Local election officials are more qualified to handle situations and calm parties and restore order.

For those reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB0670. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.

Sen. Kagan Testimony_ LBE Officials.pdf

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB670 Testimony: Local Boards of Elections Officials
Education, Energy, and the Environment (& Elections!) Committee
Wednesday, February 25, 2026 1:00pm

Maryland's election system depends on thousands of election judges and the skilled employees of our Local Boards of Elections (LBE). Under current law, only election judges can maintain order and manage observers inside polling places. In practice, Local Board employees are often the most knowledgeable and best-trained-- and offer guidance to the judges.

SB670, requested by the Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO), provides a narrow and targeted update to Election Law by granting designated Local Board employees the same authority as election judges in three key areas:

- 1. Keeping Order**
Designated LBE staff would be empowered to maintain peace in the polling place and ensure the voting process is not disrupted.
- 2. Protecting Official Observers**
These staff members would have the authority to safeguard official challengers and watchers as they exercise their legal rights.
- 3. Managing Unofficial Observers**
They would be able to limit the number and remove anyone who violates the rules.

Efficiency and Continuity of Operations

Polling places are busy, high-pressure environments. When a chief judge is unavailable or hesitant to act, voters may be delayed and public confidence weakened. Allowing trained LBE employees to step in ensures that problems will be resolved quickly and consistently.

Highly Trained, Nonpartisan Administrators

LBE employees are career election professionals. They receive extensive training; are required by law to act impartially; and are prohibited from engaging in most political activities. Empowering the individuals most capable of maintaining order and protecting the process strengthens voter confidence, supports our election workers, and enhances the integrity of Maryland's election system.

NOTE: There are 2 amendments for the Committee's consideration:

- 1) Include the Administrator of the State Board of Elections (SBE) or his/her designee.
- 2) Technical amendments that we anticipate from SBE.

I urge a favorable report on SB670, with a June 1, 2026 effective date. This would make the law operational before Early Voting and Primary Election Day.

Unfavorable SB0670.pdf

Uploaded by: Jolie McShane

Position: UNF

Unfavorable SB0670

Why in the world are the Board of Election employees staffing the polling places? As a Chief Election Judge I am sure this is blatantly against the law. The people working at the Election Polling places are citizens who have been trained to run the local elections. Since when do we have the employees running elections? This bill should be tossed on it's poor concept.

Jolie McShane
12912 Gent Road
Reisterstown, MD 21136
410-299-3032

SB 670_HB 1001_ Election Law - Local Board of Ele

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

SB 670/HB 1001: Election Law - Local Board of Elections Employees - Authority at Polling Places: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Government, Labor & Elections Committee & Education, Energy & the Environment Committee:

I am writing to express my strong **opposition** to **SB 670/HB 1001**, "Election Law - Local Board of Elections Employees - Authority at Polling Places."

This legislation significantly expands the powers of unelected local board of elections employees at polling places in ways that could undermine transparency, fairness, and the rule of law during elections.

Key concerns include:

- Requiring police officers on duty at polling places to obey orders from local board employees (who are administrative staff, not necessarily trained in law enforcement or de-escalation), potentially creating confusion over chain of command and conflicting with established police authority and protocols.
- Granting local board employees independent authority to keep the peace, order arrests for breaches of peace, election law violations, or interference with judges—**powers typically reserved for sworn law enforcement to prevent abuse, bias, or overreach.**
- Allowing board employees to unilaterally deny admission to or eject challengers and watchers (key bipartisan mechanisms for election integrity and oversight) **based on subjective judgments**, such as suspected delays to poll opening or failure to arrive early enough. **This could discourage legitimate poll watching, suppress citizen oversight, and erode public confidence in election processes.**

Poll workers and election judges already have sufficient authority to manage polling places effectively under current law. Expanding arrest powers, command over police, and ejection discretion to non-sworn administrative employees risks politicization, inconsistent application across jurisdictions, liability issues for the state, and intimidation of voters or observers. **Maryland's elections should prioritize neutrality, accountability through trained law enforcement when needed, and robust, protected opportunities for bipartisan challengers and watchers to ensure integrity—not concentrate more unchecked power in unelected staff.**

I urge the Committee to **give SB 670 / HB 1001 an unfavorable report** and prevent its passage. **Protecting the balance of authority, preserving citizen oversight, and**

maintaining clear boundaries between election administration and law enforcement are essential for fair, transparent, and trusted elections in Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals

SB0670-EEE_MACo_LOI.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Kinnally

Position: INFO



Senate Bill 670

Election Law - Local Board of Elections Employees - Authority at Polling Places

MACo Position:

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Date: February 25, 2026

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) takes no position on SB 670 but provides this letter of information and urges the Committee to consider several operational, safety, and governance considerations.

County governments remain committed to conducting safe, secure, and orderly elections, protecting both voters and election workers, and preserving public confidence in the electoral process.

SB 670 expands the authority of local board of elections employees serving at polling places. The bill requires a police officer stationed at a polling place to follow the orders of a local board employee, in addition to election judges, and authorizes those employees to keep the peace, direct law enforcement action, and manage challengers and watchers.

In recent election cycles, local election staff have faced heightened political tensions, increased scrutiny, and, in some instances, direct threats. Clarifying authority at polling places responds to those conditions. However, granting local board employees new enforcement authority raises concerns and may not be the most appropriate remedy to address election safety challenges.

Placing county employees in a more direct enforcement role may blur the distinction between election administration and sworn public safety authority. Counties must consider whether enhanced coordination with law enforcement and clearer operational protocols would better address safety concerns without shifting additional enforcement responsibility to election staff.

The bill also raises structural questions about accountability. Law enforcement officers operate under established public safety standards, while local board employees function within a State-regulated election system. Clear training, defined roles, and consistent oversight remain essential to avoid confusion regarding command structure and on-site decision-making.

For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to consider the operational impact on county election administration, employee safety, and the need to maintain clear lines of authority and accountability at polling places.