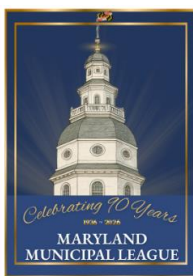


HB 357 CF - FAV - MML.pdf

Uploaded by: Angelica Bailey Thupari

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

DATE: March 25, 2026

POSITION: Favorable

BILL: HB 357

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) appreciates the intent behind House Bill 357 and thanks the Sponsor for working collaboratively with us on targeted amendments. As introduced, the bill raised several administrative and implementation concerns for municipalities, which resulted in our original Favorable with Amendments position. With the adoption of amendments developed in coordination with MML, those concerns have been addressed while preserving the bill's transparency objectives, and we are able to support the bill in its current form.

As originally drafted, House Bill 357 required municipalities to report the dates of both regular and special municipal elections to the State Board of Elections (SBE), including advance notice requirements of six months for regular elections and five business days for special elections. The bill also required municipalities, SBE, and county boards of elections to publish municipal election information online and required municipalities to submit certified election results to SBE within 30 days.

MML supported the goal of improving transparency and public access to municipal election information. However, the original language created new reporting and notice requirements that did not always align with how municipal elections are scheduled and administered, particularly for special elections, which are often governed by local charter provisions and may occur on short timelines. These provisions risked creating technical noncompliance without significantly improving public access.

MML worked with the sponsor on amendments that maintain the bill's transparency goals while aligning the requirements with existing municipal practices. As amended, the bill relies largely on current reporting and posting processes rather than creating new standalone deadlines. This approach preserves public access to election information while avoiding unnecessary administrative burden for municipalities.

MML encourages the Committee to accept the bill as revised. With no further amendments, MML's position is favorable.

For more information relating to this piece of testimony, please contact:
Angelica Bailey Thupari: Director, Advocacy and Public Policy, angelicab@mdmunicipal.org

Maryland's 157 municipalities operate on varied election cycles; some years see a municipal election every month.

Favorable Testimony on House Bill 357 - Municipali

Uploaded by: Jamie Shopland

Position: FAV

March 23, 2026

Maryland State Senate
House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

RE: Favorable Testimony on House Bill 357 - Municipalities - Election Dates - Reporting Requirements

Chair Feldman and members of the Committee:

My name is Jamie Shopland, and I am a candidate for Frederick County Council in District 2. I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 357.

I have served as a chief or other type of election judge in Frederick County for at least 4 election cycles. In that role, I've seen firsthand how much work goes into running secure, accurate, and fair elections and how critical clear communication is to ensuring that voters can actually participate in the democratic process to elect their leaders.

In May 2025, I volunteered to help a candidate in the municipal election in Woodsboro, Maryland. Through that experience, I noticed a real gap in how election information is communicated to the public. Basic details such as when an election is happening, what offices are on the ballot, and how to participate can be difficult to find, inconsistent across jurisdictions, or simply not available in a timely and centralized way. That lack of clarity creates an unnecessary barrier to participation, especially for voters who are trying to engage in local elections for the first time.

House Bill 357 addresses this problem in a practical and effective way.

By requiring municipalities to report election dates to the State Board of Elections and ensuring that this information is prominently displayed at the state, local, and municipal levels, the bill creates a clear, consistent, and reliable source of information for voters. It also ensures that key details like whether an election is regular or special and which offices are on the ballot are easily accessible.

These may seem like small administrative improvements, but they have a meaningful impact. When voters don't know an election is happening, they can't participate. When information is scattered or unclear, participation drops. Transparency and accessibility are foundational to a healthy democracy, and this bill strengthens both.

As someone who has worked inside polling places and seen both the dedication of election workers and the confusion voters sometimes face, I believe this bill is a commonsense step toward making our elections more accessible and easier to navigate.

At a time when we should be doing everything possible to lower barriers to participation, not raise them, House Bill 357 takes a clear step in the right direction. No Marylander should miss an election because they couldn't find basic information about when or how to vote. This bill makes that expectation real.

I urge a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jamie Shopland, Candidate
Frederick County Council District 2
Urbana, MD 21704

By Authority: Friends of Jamie Shopland, Elizabeth Heaney, Treasurer.

Delegate Palakovich Carr-HB 357-Municipal Election

Uploaded by: Julie Palakovich Carr

Position: FAV

JULIE PALAKOVICH CARR
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Ways and Means Committee
Chair, Revenues Subcommittee

Chair, Montgomery County
House Delegation



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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.

03-25-2026 - HB 357 Municipalities - Election Date

Uploaded by: Nikki Tyree

Position: FAV



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

HB 357 Municipalities – Election Dates – Reporting Requirements

POSITION: Favorable

By: Linda Kohn, President

Date: March 25, 2026

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/>