

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