



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB670 Testimony: Local Boards of Elections Officials
House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
Wednesday, April 1, 2026, 1PM

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, election directors 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 the State Board of Elections (SBE) Administrator and election directors, or their designee, the same authority as the judges in three key areas:

- 1. Keeping Order**
Election directors, or their designee, 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 election directors and the SBE administrator, or their designee, to step in ensures that problems will be resolved quickly and consistently.

Highly Trained, Nonpartisan Administrators

Election directors and the SBE Administrator 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.

Amendments to the Senate bill were adopted to:

- Include the Administrator of the State Board of Elections (SBE) or their designee.
- Address technical changes requested by SBE.
- Clarify that the provisions apply to election directors rather than local board employees.
- Insert “or early voting center” where applicable.
- Add specifications for canvassing rooms.
- Add specifications regarding challengers and watchers.

The bill passed the Senate (38-4) and passed the House unanimously. I have confirmed with Del. Dana Jones, the crossfile sponsor, that she supports amending the House version (HB1001) to match the Senate bill.

The June 1, 2026 effective date would make the law operational before Early Voting and Primary Election Day.

I urge a favorable report on SB670.