

# HOUSE BILL 656

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11r2103

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By: **Delegate Crosby**

Introduced and read first time: January 22, 2021

Assigned to: Ways and Means

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Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: February 27, 2021

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## CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Election Law – Early Voting Centers – ~~Accessibility by Public Transportation~~**  
3 **Bus Stops**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring that, ~~in a county that has fixed-route public transportation~~  
5 ~~service, each early voting center be located within a certain distance of a public~~  
6 ~~transportation station or stop; if an early voting center is located within a certain~~  
7 distance of a fixed local bus route and to the maximum extent practicable, buses  
8 operating on that route allow passengers to embark and disembark at the entrance  
9 of the early voting center during certain times; providing for the application of this  
10 Act; and generally relating to early voting centers.

11 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
12 Article – Election Law  
13 Section 10–301.1  
14 Annotated Code of Maryland  
15 (2017 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement)

16 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
17 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

18 **Article – Election Law**

19 10–301.1.

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 (a) Except as provided under Title 9, Subtitle 3 of this article, during any  
2 regularly scheduled primary or general election a voter may vote:

3 (1) in the voter's assigned precinct on election day; or

4 (2) at an early voting center in the voter's county of residence on any early  
5 voting day in accordance with this section.

6 (b) (1) Each county shall have at least one early voting center established in  
7 the county as prescribed in this subsection.

8 (2) A county with fewer than 125,000 registered voters shall have one early  
9 voting center established in the county.

10 (3) A county with more than 125,000 registered voters but fewer than  
11 200,000 registered voters shall have three early voting centers established in the county.

12 (4) A county with more than 200,000 registered voters but fewer than  
13 300,000 registered voters shall have four early voting centers established in the county.

14 (5) A county with more than 300,000 registered voters but fewer than  
15 450,000 registered voters shall have seven early voting centers established in the county.

16 (6) A county with more than 450,000 registered voters shall have eleven  
17 early voting centers.

18 (7) In addition to the early voting centers required in this subsection, each  
19 county may establish one additional early voting center if the State Board, in collaboration  
20 with the local board, and the governing body of the county agree to establish an additional  
21 early voting center.

22 (c) No later than 6 months before a primary election, the State Board, in  
23 collaboration with the local board in each county, shall designate each early voting center  
24 in that county.

25 (d) Each early voting center shall be open for voting as follows:

26 (1) beginning the second Thursday before a primary or general election  
27 through the Thursday before the election; and

28 (2) during the following hours:

29 (i) in a presidential general election, during the hours between  
30 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. each early voting day; and

31 (ii) in all other elections, during the hours between 10 a.m. and  
32 8 p.m. each early voting day.

1 (e) Each early voting center shall:

2 ~~(1) IN A COUNTY THAT HAS FIXED-ROUTE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION~~  
 3 ~~SERVICE, BE LOCATED NOT MORE THAN 500 FEET FROM A PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION~~  
 4 ~~STATION OR STOP; AND~~

5 ~~(2)~~ satisfy the requirements of § 10-101 of this title.

6 (F) (1) (I) THIS SUBSECTION APPLIES ONLY TO A FIXED LOCAL BUS  
 7 ROUTE:

8 1. FUNDED BY A COUNTY OR A MUNICIPAL  
 9 CORPORATION AND OPERATED BY THE COUNTY OR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OR A  
 10 CONTRACTOR FOR THE COUNTY OR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION; OR

11 2. IN BALTIMORE CITY AND BALTIMORE COUNTY ONLY,  
 12 FUNDED AND OPERATED BY THE MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION.

13 (II) THIS SUBSECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO A LONG-DISTANCE  
 14 COMMUTER BUS ROUTE THAT:

15 1. IS FUNDED BY THE MARYLAND TRANSIT  
 16 ADMINISTRATION; AND

17 2. HAS LIMITED STOPS BETWEEN AN URBAN CENTER  
 18 AND OUTLYING AREAS.

19 (2) IF AN EARLY VOTING CENTER IS LOCATED WITHIN ONE-HALF  
 20 MILE OF A FIXED LOCAL BUS ROUTE, BUSES OPERATING ON THAT ROUTE SHALL, TO  
 21 THE MAXIMUM EXTENT PRACTICABLE, ALLOW PASSENGERS TO EMBARK AND  
 22 DISEMBARK AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE EARLY VOTING CENTER DURING THE TIMES  
 23 THE CENTER IS OPEN FOR VOTING UNDER SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS SECTION.

24 ~~(G)~~ (G) Beginning 30 days prior to each early voting period the State Board  
 25 and each local board shall undertake steps to inform the public about early voting and the  
 26 location of early voting centers in each county, including:

27 (1) a series of public service media announcements;

28 (2) mailings to all registered voters in each county; and

29 (3) other measures as appropriate.

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1        ~~(e)~~ **(H)**        Except as expressly provided in this section, any provision of this article  
2 that applies to voting on election day also applies to early voting.

3        ~~(h)~~ **(I)**        The State Board shall adopt regulations and guidelines in accordance  
4 with the requirements of this section for the conduct of early voting.

5        SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
6 October 1, 2021.

Approved:

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Governor.

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Speaker of the House of Delegates.

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President of the Senate.