

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 1005 (Delegate Crosby)
 Ways and Means

Election Law - Early Voting Centers - Number Required

This bill adjusts the voter registration-based requirements for the number of early voting centers in each county by requiring a county with more than 70,000 registered voters but fewer than 125,000 registered voters to have two early voting centers established in the county instead of one early voting center.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$20,000 annually beginning in FY 2022 and by \$30,000 annually beginning in FY 2024. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	20,000	20,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Net Effect	(\$20,000)	(\$20,000)	(\$30,000)	(\$30,000)	(\$30,000)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: Local government expenditures increase collectively by \$120,000 annually beginning in FY 2022 and by \$205,000 annually beginning in FY 2024. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law: The required number of early voting centers in each county is modified as shown in **Exhibit 1**.

Exhibit 1
Early Voting Centers

Current Law		Under the Bill	
Registered Voters In a County	Early Voting Centers*	Registered Voters In a County	Early Voting Centers*
<125,000	1	<70,000	1
125,000-200,000	3	70,000-125,000	2
200,000-300,000	4	125,000-200,000	3
300,000-450,000	7	200,000-300,000	4
>450,000	11	300,000-450,000	7
		>450,000	11

*Under current law and under the bill, counties may establish one additional early voting center if the State Board of Elections, in collaboration with the local board of elections, and the governing body of the county agree to establish an additional center.

State and Local Fiscal Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$20,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2022 and by \$30,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2024, due to costs of additional voting equipment and voting equipment transportation for additional early voting centers. The State Board of Elections (SBE) shares voting system costs with the local boards of election pursuant to Chapter 564 of 2001.

Local government expenditures increase collectively by \$120,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2022 and by \$205,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2024, due to the costs of additional voting equipment and voting equipment transportation (shared with the State), and operating costs, for additional early voting centers.

The estimate assumes that the optional early voting centers provided by various counties in the 2020 general election are continued in future elections in the absence of the bill. The estimate assumes, based on voter registration levels and past voter registration growth in the various counties, that (1) three additional early voting centers are established for the 2022 elections and (2) two more (for a total of five) additional early voting centers are established for the 2024 elections, as shown below:

- Calvert – one early voting center added in 2024;
- Cecil – one early voting center added in 2022;
- St. Mary’s – one early voting center added in 2022;

- Washington – one early voting center added in 2022; and
- Wicomico – one early voting center added in 2024.

The cost estimates are based on average operating costs of early voting centers for counties in different tiers of voter registration populations (Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties in the top tier; Anne Arundel County and Baltimore City in the next tier; *etc.*) across primary and general elections, along with information provided by SBE regarding amounts of equipment used per early voting center by the different counties in 2018. The average operating costs per early voting center are based on past early voting cost information collected by the Department of Legislative Services, adjusted using more recent information provided by certain local boards of elections. Actual operating costs may be somewhat lower in primary election years and higher in general election years because of lower and higher expected voter turnout, respectively.

This estimate is based on costs for the State’s current voting system, the contract for which extends through the 2022 elections. Actual voting system costs associated with this bill may vary from this estimate depending on how costs of the statewide voting system change for the 2024 and future elections.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): State Board of Elections; Calvert, St. Mary’s, and Wicomico counties; Department of Legislative Services

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rh/hlb

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