

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 596

(Senator Washington)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Election Law - Early Voting Centers - Hours of Operation

This bill increases the hours during which early voting centers are open for regular primary and general elections, so that early voting centers are open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. each early voting day, for each election, instead of (1) from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. each early voting day, for presidential general elections and (2) from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. each early voting day, for all other regular primary and general elections.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by approximately \$15,500 in FY 2022 through FY 2024 and future fiscal years in which a gubernatorial primary or general election or a presidential primary election occurs and by approximately \$5,000 in FY 2025 and future fiscal years in which a presidential general election occurs. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	15,500	15,500	15,500	5,000	15,500
Net Effect	(\$15,500)	(\$15,500)	(\$15,500)	(\$5,000)	(\$15,500)

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

Local Effect: Local government expenditures increase annually, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Early voting centers are open, in a presidential general election, during the hours between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. each early voting day. In all other regular primary and general elections, early voting centers are open during the hours between 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. each early voting day.

State and Local Fiscal Effect: Increasing the number of hours early voting centers are open each early voting day is expected to increase the State and local boards of elections' costs.

Both the State and local boards of elections' costs increase for additional compensation of voting system support personnel under the State Board of Elections' (SBE) staffing contract, which is a voting system cost shared by the State and local boards of elections. These support personnel are used in many, but not all, early voting centers (some counties separately hire their own voting system support personnel). General fund expenditures and local government expenditures each increase by approximately \$15,500 annually in fiscal 2022 through 2024 and future fiscal years in which a gubernatorial primary or general election or a presidential primary election occurs, and by approximately \$5,000 in fiscal 2025 and future fiscal years in which a presidential general election occurs, for the additional voting system support personnel compensation under SBE's staffing contract.

Local boards of elections may also incur additional costs, primarily associated with (1) additional non-election judge personnel, that support early voting, working additional hours in the mornings of early voting days (including voting system support personnel that are hired outside of the SBE staffing contract) and (2) an expectation in some counties that the additional hours election judges will have to work will make recruitment or retention of election judges more difficult.

Some counties may incur relatively minimal or no additional costs, while others' costs will be more significant. Of a small number of counties contacted about the impact, Washington County does not expect costs to increase and Worcester County indicates that costs will increase by \$4,400 annually to increase compensation for early voting election judges. Baltimore City indicates that it also would increase election judge compensation, increasing costs by \$43,500 annually. Montgomery County, the State's largest jurisdiction, which operates 11 early voting centers, expects to incur more significant increased costs – \$50,000 annually in overtime for elections and facilities staff (except in fiscal years when a presidential general election occurs, when the cost increase is \$16,500) and potentially up to \$67,000 annually to recruit, train, and pay additional part-time election judges to mitigate the impact of the additional hours added to early voting days.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1094 of 2020 passed the House with amendments and was referred to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, but no further action was taken.

Designated Cross File: HB 206 (Delegate Washington) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): State Board of Elections; Baltimore City; Montgomery, Washington, and Worcester counties; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 15, 2021
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