

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2022 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 284 (Senator Washington)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Election Law - Voter Registration Drive - High Schools

This bill requires a local board of elections to conduct a voter registration drive in each public high school in the county, at least once a year, in a manner agreed to by the local board of elections and the county board of education. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: Any costs incurred by local boards of elections to implement the bill are expected to be minimal.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill requires that, at least once each school year, each local board of elections conduct a voter registration drive in each public high school in the county in a manner specified in an agreement between the local board of elections and the county board of education. Each public official responsible for the use of a public high school must make available to the local board of elections, without charge, the space that is needed in the building for the proper conduct of a voter registration drive.

“Voter registration drive” means a voter registration site administered by a local board of elections where voter registration applications approved by the State Board of Elections (SBE) are distributed to individuals eligible to register to vote. A voter registration drive may include:

- an event on school property, during school hours, open to each employee of and student enrolled in the school who is or will be age 16 or older during the immediately following year, where completed voter registration applications are accepted by a local board of elections official, employee, or authorized volunteer for transmittal to the appropriate election official; or
- local board of elections officials, employees, or authorized volunteers visiting classrooms within a school, during school hours, distributing voter registration applications to each employee of and student enrolled in the school who is or will be age 16 or older during the immediately following year and accepting completed voter registration applications for transmittal to the appropriate election official.

Current Law: Under State law, with certain exceptions, an individual may register to vote if the individual is a citizen of the United States, is at least age 16, and is a resident of the State as of the day the individual seeks to register.

An individual may apply to become a registered voter through a number of means including (1) visiting an election board office; (2) by mail; (3) when applying for services at a voter registration agency (specified public and nongovernmental agencies designated by SBE, including agencies providing public assistance and services for individuals with disabilities, public higher education institutions, military recruiting offices, and one-stop career centers in the Maryland Department of Labor); (4) during an applicable transaction at automatic voter registration agencies, which are the Motor Vehicle Administration, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, local departments of social services, and the Mobility Certification Office in the Maryland Transit Administration; (5) through SBE's online voter registration system; or (6) at an early voting center or an election day polling place in their county of residence.

Chapters 656 and 657 of 2021 require a public institution of higher education to develop and implement a student voting plan that includes, among other things, (1) wide dissemination of information about voter registration and voting opportunities to all students; (2) provision of voter registration materials at central locations and high-traffic areas on campus; and (3) encouragement and support of recognized student organizations engaged in activities to increase voter registration and voting by students.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 423 of 2019 passed the House with amendments and received an unfavorable report from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. Its cross file, SB 934, received an unfavorable report from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Designated Cross File: HB 201 (Delegate Kelly, *et al.*) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): State Board of Elections; Governor's Office; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Planning; Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles, and Somerset counties; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Prince George's County Public Schools; Maryland Association of Election Officials; Department of Legislative Services

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