



HB 1094: Election Law – Early Voting Centers - Hours of Operation

House Ways & Means Committee, February 27, 2020

Position: FAVOR

Chair Kaiser, Vice-Chair Washington, and Committee Members,

This bill seeks to expand early voting hours during gubernatorial elections and presidential primary elections to make them consistent with the hours of early voting offered during presidential general elections, which begin at 8:00am. During all other elections, early voting currently begins at 10:00 am.

The US Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey provides the following data about Maryland commuters in our two largest counties:

- **38.5%** of Montgomery Co residents work outside of Montgomery Co.
- **60%** of Prince George's Co residents work outside of Prince George's Co.
- **49%** of Montgomery Co residents leave for work before 8:00am.
- **55%** of Prince George's Co residents leave for work before 8:00am.
- The mean commute time in Montgomery Co is about **35 mins**.
- The mean commute time in Prince George's Co is about **37 mins**.
- **43.5%** of Montgomery Co commuters travel more than 35 mins; **17%** commute for an hour or more.
- **48%** of Prince George's Co commuters travel more than 37 mins; **20%** commute for an hour or more.

What these data tell us is that a polling place that opens at 10:00am does not serve these voters because they are no longer in their county at that time. This means they can only vote in the evenings or on weekends, often causing long lines at early voting centers during those times. Opening earlier in the morning, as we do during presidential general elections, would serve voters better. Since early voting is offered as a convenience, data can inform us about how to make it convenient for the largest number of voters.

We urge the committee to return a favorable report on this common-sense bill.

Respectfully,

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