



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

January 30, 2024

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SB29 – Information

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee Members:

My name is John Michael Gudger, chair of the Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) Legislative Committee. To the Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am presenting this testimony on behalf of the Maryland Association of Election Officials to provide an informational perspective on Senate Bill 29, which proposes significant changes to the conduct of special elections in Maryland. Our association, representing election administrators across the state, aims to outline the practical implications and considerations of this bill for Local Boards of Elections.

Senate Bill 29 introduces a mail-in voting system as the primary method for conducting special elections, while maintaining in-person voting centers. This approach represents a shift towards accommodating contemporary voting preferences and can potentially streamline the voting process for both voters and election officials. However, the bill implies an increase in the frequency of special elections, which could lead to higher operational costs for Local Boards. Managing these additional elections requires careful budgeting and resource allocation, including staffing, materials, secure storage space and administrative overhead.

The bill maintains the provision for in-person voting centers, providing options for those who either did not receive a ballot or refuse to vote by mail. Local Boards are responsible for selecting these voting center locations, taking into consideration factors like accessibility, proximity to high-density voter areas, and public transportation access. This responsibility empowers Local Boards to make strategic decisions to serve their communities effectively, but also presents the challenge of balancing resources and accessibility needs within tight timeframes characteristic of special elections.

A notable aspect of Senate Bill 29 is the authority granted to Local Boards to adjust election-related deadlines within the context of special elections. This flexibility is important for adapting to the unique challenges and condensed timelines that special elections often present, while still upholding the integrity of the electoral process.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 29 presents a series of changes that will significantly impact the operations of Local Boards of Elections. While it offers potential efficiencies and aligns with modern voting trends, it also requires careful consideration of resource allocation, voter accessibility, and the adaptability of election administration processes, especially in the context of the increased financial implications due to more frequent special elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this informational perspective on behalf of the Maryland Association of Election Officials.

Sincerely,
John Michael Gudger
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Chair, MAEO Legislative Committee