



House Bill 286

Election Law - Registration and Voting at Precinct Polling Places

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Ways & Means Committee

Date: February 12, 2019

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 286 WITH AMENDMENTS**. The bill would authorize an individual to register and vote at a polling place on election day. As written, the legislation places a very substantial administrative and cost burden onto local Boards of Elections, whose functions are supported by county funding.

Same-day voter registration, also known as Election Day registration, is meant to extend voting franchise as widely as possible to eligible voters. **MACo does not raise policy objections with this goal – county concerns are merely practical and cost-driven.**

HB 286 is a major unfunded mandate on county governments. MACo urges amendments to ensure state resources be provided to support its substantial costs, and alleviate the mandate.

As a rule, MACo resists state policies that result in costly or burdensome local implementation. This bill would result in substantial costs to local Boards of Elections, which are charged with converting raw citizen data generated by state agencies into updated and voter-approved registration rolls. Local Boards of Elections indicate costs per county ranging up to hundreds of thousands of dollars per election. Furthermore, the process of registering a person to vote, making the required checks, and adding the information to the database will take a substantial amount of time, which could result in long lines at polling places.

MACo suggests that if same-day voter registration merits a top priority for state policymakers, implementing legislation should either direct state agencies to carry out these functions at state expense, or should provide the resources needed by local election boards and staff.

Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 286, with amendments necessary to avoid a substantial unfunded mandate on local governments. MACo would be pleased to join local election administrators in working with the Committee to develop bill language that accomplishes this goal.