



House Bill 345

Elective Franchise – Registration and Voting at Polling Place

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Ways & Means Committee

Date: February 16, 2017

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 345. This bill would empower the General Assembly to pass a law authorizing an individual to register and vote at a polling place on Election Day. Counties are concerned this legislation places a substantial administrative and cost burden onto local Boards of Elections, whose operations are supported by county funding. Without state resources to offset these potentially large costs, the bill represents an unfunded mandate on local governments.

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 these goals – county concerns are merely practical and cost-driven.

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.

Under state law, counties have no choice but to fund these costs – competing for limited local funds against education, public safety, roadway maintenance, and other essential public services.

This bill would place a costly mandate on county governments to carry out new state policy. Accordingly, without funds and possible technical assistance to suitably implement the bill's requirements, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 345.