



Senate Bill 363

Election Law - Voting Systems - Accessibility for Voters With Disabilities

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee

Date: February 28, 2019

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 363. This bill would require each voter to use a ballot marking device that is accessible to voters with disabilities to vote at an early voting center or an Election Day polling place. The legislation places a very substantial administrative and cost burden onto local Boards of Elections, whose functions are supported by county funding.

SB 363 seeks to ensure that voters with disabilities are provided specified access to voting that is equivalent to access afforded voters without disabilities. **MACo does not raise policy objections with this goal – 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, driving needs for additional ballot marking devices (approximately 18,000 statewide) to accommodate all eligible voters, as well as increased storage and transportation costs.

Furthermore, local Boards of Elections indicate substantial costs for information technology personnel to test, prepare, troubleshoot, and maintain the additional ballot marking devices. According to the bill's fiscal and policy note, county expenditures would increase by \$6 million per election cycle.

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, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on SB 363.