



House Bill 538

Voters' Rights Protection Act of 2022

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: February 15, 2022

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 538.

This bill would require each early voting center to be open for three additional days for each primary and general election. **MACo does not raise policy objections with this goal – county concerns are merely practical and cost-driven.**

This bill places a substantial administrative and cost burden onto local boards of elections, whose functions are supported by county funding. Without state resources to offset these substantial costs, the bill represents an unfunded mandate on local governments.

Early voting centers entail substantial costs for equipment purchases/leases, equipment storage and transportation, staff compensation and training, and other overhead. These costs are nearly fully borne by the county governments.

As a rule, MACo resists policies that trigger costly or burdensome local implementation. If expanding in-person early voting is a top priority for state policymakers, legislation should provide the needed funding for additional equipment and related expenses, and resources to offset the resulting staff and operations costs for local boards of elections and their administration.

Under current law, counties have no choice but to fund these costs – competing for limited local funds against public health, schools, 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 the proper funding and resources to suitably implement the bill's requirements, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 538.