



House Bill 1001

Election Law - Local Board of Elections Employees - Authority at Polling Places

MACo Position:

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Date: February 25, 2026

To: Government, Labor, and Elections
Committee

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) takes no position on HB 1001 but provides this letter of information and urges the Committee to consider several operational, safety, and governance considerations.

County governments remain committed to conducting safe, secure, and orderly elections, protecting both voters and election workers, and preserving public confidence in the electoral process.

HB 1001 expands the authority of local board of elections employees serving at polling places. The bill requires a police officer stationed at a polling place to follow the orders of a local board employee, in addition to election judges, and authorizes those employees to keep the peace, direct law enforcement action, and manage challengers and watchers.

In recent election cycles, local election staff have faced heightened political tensions, increased scrutiny, and, in some instances, direct threats. Clarifying authority at polling places responds to those conditions. However, granting local board employees new enforcement authority raises concerns and may not be the most appropriate remedy to address election safety challenges.

Placing county employees in a more direct enforcement role may blur the distinction between election administration and sworn public safety authority. Counties must consider whether enhanced coordination with law enforcement and clearer operational protocols would better address safety concerns without shifting additional enforcement responsibility to election staff.

The bill also raises structural questions about accountability. Law enforcement officers operate under established public safety standards, while local board employees function within a State-regulated election system. Clear training, defined roles, and consistent oversight remain essential to avoid confusion regarding command structure and on-site decision-making.

For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to consider the operational impact on county election administration, employee safety, and the need to maintain clear lines of authority and accountability at polling places.