



July 13, 2020

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Governor of the State of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

We are writing to express our concern regarding your direction to the State Board of Elections to “follow existing state law and conduct the November election with enhanced voting options.” We are asking that you reconsider this directive and instead consider the “hybrid” vote-by-mail election with extended in-person voting centers, recommended to you by the Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO).

The direction you have provided will require local Boards of Elections to, in essence, conduct two elections – a vote-by-mail election as well as a regular election. This is a herculean task that not only keeps local election boards from building on the success and lessons learned in the vote-by-mail primary election, but sets up a course for failure. We have only to look at the failures across the country of states that required vote-by-mail ballot applications in which millions of additional dollars had to be spent, elections staff overwhelmed with last minute applications that could not be processed in time for Election Day, and the resulting need to extend voting hours as voters were forced to the polls.

Our own experience tells us that people will be standing together for prolonged periods indoors as they wait to receive and then cast their ballots. And, as we saw in primaries across the country, the volume of voters at polls makes it difficult for voters to effectively practice physical distancing.

We are also very concerned about the capacity to support the necessary number of polling places, as facility use may be limited. Many of our traditional polls are housed at K-12 public schools to which we have not had access during the pandemic. Based on feedback we have already begun to receive, we believe there will be limited availability of private venues, like places of worship, community centers, nursing homes and senior centers, due to health and safety concerns.

Further, we expect there will be a need for an increased number of poll workers in order to adequately extend voting hours and opportunity. Those staffing polling centers will also have to perform the necessary enhanced cleaning and sanitizing required to comply with CDC and health department guidelines. While this level of staffing would be difficult in a typical year, health and safety concerns of volunteers due to COVID-19 will drastically impact the ability of election boards in this area. This shortage of poll center staff will be further exacerbated by the fact that many of our long-standing volunteers and election judges are older and, therefore, more vulnerable.

Your directive may cause a hardship for voters. We are worried that voters will be challenged by the timeline in having to submit a vote-by-mail application in order to receive a ballot in time. We are concerned there will be confusion among voters who voted with the process used during the primary election. And we are most especially concerned that voters, unable to meet the ballot application deadline, will be forced to go to the polls, putting themselves and others at undue health risk.

We are aware of the concerns that have been raised with regards to mailing ballots to voters. However, we have confidence in the professional expertise and judgement of our local Boards of Elections and support their suggestions which address these concerns with specific remedies. These include increasing access to in-person vote centers during Early Voting and on Election Day, sending a special mailing to active and inactive voters to verify addresses, and sending a mailing to inactive voters that can be forwarded.

Thank you for your consideration of our request, which we believe will achieve our shared goal to ensure all Marylanders have the opportunity to vote easily and safely.

Respectfully,



Steuart Pittman
Anne Arundel County Executive




Bernard C. "Jack" Young
Mayor of the City of Baltimore



Johnny Olszewski, Jr.
Baltimore County Executive



Jan H. Gardner
Frederick County Executive



Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive



Marc Elrich
Montgomery County Executive



Angela Alsobrooks
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The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President, Maryland State Senate
The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker of the House, Maryland State Senate
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