



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 1200 - Elections - Election Judges - Minimum Compensation

POSITION: Favorable

BY: Nancy Soreng – President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland favors an election system that helps increase voter participation and one way voters participate is in staffing our polling places. However, in recent years it has become challenging to recruit and retain enough election workers to adequately serve the majority of Marylanders who choose to vote in person. Increasing election worker stipends can make a difference, which is why we support HB 1200.

Election judges typically work at least two hours setting up on Monday night before Election Day, and at least 15 hours on Election Day itself. Early Voting days are also around 15 hours long. (In both cases, polls are open for voting from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Election workers must arrive at 6 a.m. and stay until the site has closed down for the day.) Some jurisdictions currently pay as little as \$150 for this demanding effort. Training typically adds another three hours or more, with a separate small stipend that can be as low as \$25.

The League supports the state setting a minimum compensation level for election judges. This level would be a floor rather than a fixed amount, allowing jurisdictions flexibility to meet their recruiting needs. The state must also ensure that these judges receive mandatory training in their responsibilities as election workers.

HB 1200 will set the statewide minimum daily compensation at \$250 for working Election Day or a day of Early Voting. The stipend for completing the required training will be at least \$50. Although many election judges volunteer because they consider it a civic responsibility or an inherently enjoyable activity, increasing the pay will help motivate other eligible Marylanders to participate.

The League of Women Voters therefore urges a favorable report on HB 1200.