



STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

July 8, 2020

Michael R. Cogan
Chairman
State Board of Elections
151 West Street, Suite 200
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chairman Cogan:

After reviewing your *Report on June 2 Election & Recommendations for November 3 Election*, I remain concerned about the series of failures that—while not intended—potentially resulted in disenfranchisement and suppression of primary voters. Thousands of Marylanders either did not receive their ballots or received erroneous or late ballots, and thousands more stood in lines for many hours on primary day. This was and remains completely unacceptable.

The fundamental responsibility of the State Board of Elections (SBE) is to conduct free and fair elections in a manner that facilitates maximum voter participation. To that end, the general election will take place, as scheduled, on November 3, 2020, with expanded voting options:

- Every early voting center should be open and every polling location should be open on Election Day to accommodate anyone who wishes to cast their ballot safely and in person.
- To ensure that every Marylander who wants to vote by mail can vote by mail, SBE should promptly send out an absentee ballot request application to every eligible Maryland voter.
- Every effort should be made to promote early voting, absentee voting by mail, and voting at off-peak times as safe and efficient options.

This approach—which is already fully authorized by existing state law—will maximize participation in the November election by offering voters more options while minimizing confusion and risk during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The state will encourage state employees to help supplement election staffing needs, and to provide necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff and volunteers. Polling places should follow CDC guidelines and public health protocols, and stress the importance of proper sanitization, physical distancing, and face coverings.

While I know you have been inundated with suggestions from political leaders in both parties and special interest groups to change the electoral process, this discussion should not be subject to undue partisanship or political influence. Providing citizens with accessible, accountable, and transparent ways to cast their ballot is an essential component of our democratic republic and your primary responsibility. We expect SBE to live up to that commitment.

Sincerely,

Larry Hogan
Governor

cc: Linda H. Lamone, State Administrator, Maryland State Board of Elections