MARYLAND

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Memorandum

To: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
House Public Safety and Administration Subcommittee

From: Linda H. Lamone
State Administrator

Date: February 14, 2022

Subject: Response to Department of Legislative Services' FY 2024 Budget Analysis

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Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Department of Legislative Services' (DLS) analysis of the State Board of Elections' (SBE) Fiscal Year 2024 budget.

Before providing the requested comment and recommendation, I would like to recognize election officials across the State for successfully administering the 2022 General Election. Conducting an election is an enormous operation - over eight days, 1.4 million people vote at over 1600 different locations using over 12,000 pieces of equipment and managed by 20,000 temporary workers who perform these tasks twice every two years. Local election officials coordinate and support this process while also processing and counting over 540,000 mail pieces over a several week period. There are always areas for improvement in this large of an operation, but this election was a smooth and efficient election. I would like to publicly thank the staff of SBE and the local boards for their service and dedication to the voters of Maryland. For more information about the 2022 General Election, I encourage you to review our 2022 General Election Report.

While the FY24 budget includes and DLS' analysis references funding to initiate new projects, the focus of FY24 will be implementing a new electronic pollbook solution for the 2024 elections. As explained in the analysis, the project is well underway - the vendor is customizing the software to meet our needs, we are awaiting delivery of the tablets and other devices necessary to use the pollbooks, and we start testing later this month. We will continue to keep the General Assembly updated on the status of the project and implementation for the 2024 elections.

The agency should comment on how these changes in behavior will impact its budgeting and planning for future elections. (page 5)

The increase in the number of voters participating by mail will require personnel dedicated to the mail-in voting process and increase the amount of funds spent to produce and mail ballot packets.

These trends are changing how we assign duties and personnel. In prior elections, about 10 full-time staff members supported in-person voting and one, part-time staff member supported the mail-in voting program. With the increased number of voters choosing to vote a mail-in ballot, the level of support for this program also needs to increase. Supporting mail-in voting for the 2022 elections required one full-time position plus several other positions providing part-time support.

Coordinating the mail-in voting program includes:

1. Updating and approving the numerous mail-in voting forms and instructions. These include the forms and instructions to request a ballot, receive a ballot in the mail, and receive a ballot via web delivery.
2. Managing the vendor selected to print and mail the mail-in ballot applications and the vendor selected to produce and mail the ballot packets. This includes improving the quality of data used for these mailings, setting the data export and mailing schedules, and supporting the ballot packet vendor's ballot tracking system.
3. Understanding United States Postal Service's (USPS) regulations and working with USPS to ensure prompt delivery of mail-in voting materials
4. Overseeing the process of emailing or texting messages to mail-in voters.
5. Managing the process for approving the local boards' proposed locations for ballot boxes
6. Answering voters questions about mail-in voting in general and specific questions about their applications and ballots

Voting patterns in the 2022 elections guided our FY24 budget development process. Data from another election cycle will provide more guidance on the future voting trends.

The agency should discuss the reason additional equipment is required. (page 9)

The funding request for the voting system lease allows election officials to retain the additional equipment previously leased and included in the current option period and use it for the 2024 elections. For example, we added more voting equipment to the lease in January 2022. Since we want to use this equipment in the 2024 elections, we need to include funds for the lease payments associated with this equipment for the next and final option period (April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2025). The FY24 request does not include funds for any new equipment requests.

DLS recommends "continued submission of quarterly reports on the progress of and spending on the Pollbook Project through its completion" and "provid[ing] information on the scope and schedule of the two MITDPS." (pages 11 and 12, respectively)

I concur with these recommendations.