

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 21, 2023

**Ensuring Employee Safety at State and Local Election Boards Amid Recent Incidents**

*The Maryland State Board of Elections remains committed to the safety of state and local election board employees*

**ANNAPOLIS, Md** – During the November 2023 election ballot counting process, suspicious letters were sent to election offices in Nevada, California, Washington, Georgia and Oregon, with at least one letter containing fentanyl. While the Maryland State Board of Elections (SBE) and the local boards of elections (LBEs) has not received any suspicious packages recently, LBEs have encountered potentially dangerous packages in prior years.

During the 2001 Anthrax attacks, the Baltimore City Board of Elections experienced powdery materials in voter registration envelopes. The substance was investigated off site and was found not to be a harmful chemical, but instead powdered sugar. In 2022, the Carroll County Board of Elections encountered two suspicious envelopes that emitted puffs of powder when opened. Upon inspection by local law enforcement, the powder was determined to be a dried-up tortilla and pretzel pieces.

As we prepare for the 2024 election in Maryland, the State Board has provided staff and LBE staff with recommended educational materials from our partner agencies at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Homeland Security and Maryland Emergency Management. Before the 2024 Primary Election, all staff will have the opportunity to attend a live training session on best practices for handling mail in the safest manner possible and proper procedures to consider in the event that there is a suspicious package.

We greatly appreciate all voters who continue to mail-in their voter registration updates and requests for mail-in ballots to the SBE and LBEs. The cowardly attacks in other states will not intimidate election officials in Maryland from enfranchising Marylanders during the upcoming Presidential election. We join with our colleagues across the country to condemn these attacks as a threat to our American democracy and way of life and look forward to working with the Maryland General Assembly to enact even greater safety protections for election officials.

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*For inquiries about State and Local Election Board employee safety, reporters may contact: Rick Abbruzzese at [ra@kopublicaffairs.com](mailto:ra@kopublicaffairs.com).*