



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 1353 - HOWARD COUNTY - BOARD OF EDUCATION ELECTIONS - RANKED CHOICE VOTING

POSITION: Favorable

BY: Laura Mettle, Vice President

Date: March 5, 2024

The League of Women Voters exists to support and protect the citizens' right to vote for their representatives in government, to encourage all citizens to participate in elections, and to enhance representation for all voters. The League supports an election system that is representative, feasible to implement and increases voter participation, as well as being equitable, accessible, fiscally responsible, accountable and enforceable. Ranked choice voting can meet these requirements. The League of Women Voters of Howard County supports HB 1353 - Howard County - Board Of Elections - Ranked Choice Voting.

HB 1353 has the unanimous support of the legislative delegation from Howard County. Ranked choice voting is particularly well-suited for use in primary elections where several candidates may be vying for a single position, or in local elections where multiple positions will be filled from a pool of candidates. Ranked choice voting may also be used in special elections to fill vacancies in local elected offices, the Maryland General Assembly, and executive positions where applicable, saving both time and money. It is currently used in Montgomery County for some elections.

Ranked choice voting systems have the potential to reduce divisive polarization, negativity, and extremism in our politics, while allowing voters fuller expressions of their points of view, encouraging candidates to run positive campaigns, and ultimately resulting in the election of officials who represent the interests of a broad constituency in their districts. Voter participation may increase, because voting will be more meaningful.

We urge a favorable report on HB 1353. Thank you.

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All donations made to LWVHC are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.*