Testimony in Support of HB0423 Montgomery County - Voting Methods (MC 1-24)

I am submitting testimony on behalf of Ranked Choice Voting for Maryland (RCVMD.org) in support of HB 423 Montgomery County - Voting Methods (MC 1-24). RCV for Maryland is a non-partisan coalition of organizations and individuals working across the state to promote the adoption of RCV.

RCV MD supports HB0423 and believes that this bill would empower local governments in Montgomery County to respond to local needs. Montgomery County has a history of non-majority winners, which this RCV bill would remedy. Adding additional voting methods also gives voters better tools to express their choices in an election. RCV is a proven voting method already used in Maryland, across the US, and around the world. This legislation has the support of all the members of the Montgomery County Council and House Delegation.

RCV provides voters more ability to express their preferences on their ballot and to ensure that election results truly reflect the electorate's desires. RCV ensures that the winning candidate has the approval of a majority of voters, not just a plurality. Allowing voters to rank their candidates in order of preference provides additional benefits in how elections and campaigns operate. RCV has been shown to:
- Deters negative campaigning;
- Reduce vote splitting, strategic voting and so-called "spoiler" candidates;
- Encourage civil policy debates because candidates must appeal to voters not just as a first choice but as a second or third choice of voters;
- Eliminates the need and cost of runoff elections; and
- Importantly, promotes diverse representation for women and people of color.

The adoption of RCV in Maryland's electoral systems is an important step in strengthening democracy and empowering voters to engage and make their voices heard. I hope that you will support this bill.

Thank you for your consideration
Sarah Lynch
RCV Maryland, Coordinator