

Testimony

Montgomery County Delegation Ways and Means Committee

February 2, 2024

HB 0423

Name: Laurie Halverson, LD15

Position: Strongly Oppose

I am submitting testimony in opposition of HB 0423 for these reasons:

- **Not Cost Effective:** Why add to the county budget something that is not necessary. We are one of the few jurisdictions that translates to eight languages. A county Board of Elections member told me that translation alone will add at least \$500,000 and this amount was not included in the previous fiscal notes.
- **The bill is too vague:** This bill doesn't describe how the County Council can determine whether to use RCV or Approval Voting, leaving the Council enormous latitude in its application. Would the County Executive have veto rights? Would there be hearings on the issue before a decision is made? How would RCV work when there are multiple positions for one office, such as the County Council At-Large or the Circuit Court Judge positions? Will they choose to use it in certain cases to increase their own personal chances of winning? If you pass this bill, you are handing over political power that is more about the ability to increase the odds for those who are elected, and not about being in the best interest of voters.
- **It disenfranchises voters:** Voters who want to support an unpopular candidate by choosing that candidate as the #1 ranked vote would be less likely to turn out to vote, knowing that vote would be thrown away.
- **The current system isn't broken:** There is nothing wrong with the winner of the election being the one with the most votes. It's like you're trying to change how a basketball game winner is determined. Ranked Choice voting is like determining the winner of a basketball game, not based on the end score, but on the number of minutes a team was ahead. Who says there must be a majority vote to win? In Federalist Paper No. 10, James Madison wanted to prevent rule by majority faction, saying, "Measures are too often decided, not

according to the rules of justice and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority.”

- **Takes more time to determine the winner:** It could take days or weeks to determine the winner with this complicated method. People prefer immediate results. To wait days for a winner to be determined would be frustrating.
- **Too complicated to understand:** Many of our voters don't speak English as their first language, which adds to the complexity of the situation. A previous bill had an amendment to add “outreach” to help explain how these voting methods work which proved that it is difficult to understand.
- **It is an INSIDE BASEBALL tactic.** If this bill passes, County Council members would be able to manipulate the method of voting, being able to choose the method that will favor their own odds, depending on who and how many opponents file to run. Is this not “inside baseball?”
- **More opportunity for mistakes and fraud:** More bubbles to fill when voters rank their choices mean more chances for mistakes and more opportunities for fraud where areas left blank could be filled in by someone other than the voter.

Ranked Choice Voting and Approval Voting is playing a game with our current voting system that has worked for many years. **It does more to help incumbents than it does to help voters.** Let's keep the system we have, which is in the best interest of voters.