

Testimony in Support of HB1353/SB1129 (Ho. Co. 6 - 24)
Howard County Board of Education Elections - Ranked Choice Voting

I am submitting testimony in support of HB1353/SB1129 and believe that this bill would empower the Howard County Board of Education to best respond to their voters' issues. RCV is well suited to non-partisan elections where there are often multiple candidates. Ranking candidates in order of preference gives voters a stronger voice. This legislation has the unanimous support of the Howard County Delegation.

RCV provides voters greater ability to express their preferences on their ballot and to ensure that election results truly reflect the electorates' preferences. RCV ensures that the winning candidate has the approval of a majority of their electorate, not just a plurality. Allowing voters to rank their candidates in order of preference provides additional benefits in how election and campaign operate. RCV has been shown to:

- Deter 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.

RCV is already being used all across the country, including in Maryland, in a wide range of jurisdictions. This election reform is not new, only growing in relevance.

- Voters in 24 cities and counties – home to 10 million people – used RCV in 2023.
- Across those 24 jurisdictions, voters used RCV in 70 elections.
- Voters in seven cities voted in favor of preserving, adopting, or expanding RCV
- Six states passed RCV legislation.

By 2020 Democratic primary voters in Alaska, Hawaii, Kansas, and Wyoming used RCV. Additionally, RCV was used by the Virginia Republican Party to select their nominees for statewide office and select congressional districts in 2021. RCV is on the move in 2024. It remains the fastest-growing nonpartisan election reform in the nation. Maryland can continue to lead this movement by passing the enabling legislation for the adoption of RCV in Howard County Board of Education elections.

Please support HB1353/SB1129 Authorizing RCV in Howard County Board of Education Elections.

Thank you for your consideration,
Owen Anderson