

Testimony Against SB0342

Honorable Delegates

Please enter an unfavorable report against SB0342.

I am against prohibiting the imposition or application of a method for electing the governing body of a county or municipality that impairs the ability of members of a protected class to elect candidates of the members' choice or influence the outcome of an election by diluting or abridging the rights of voters who are members of a protected class.

This bill seems to make it easy for a group in a protected class who cannot get the candidate they want elected, to claim that:

- The election process must have diluted their ability to get the outcome they desired
- The precinct boundaries must have diluted their ability to get the outcome they desired; or
- polarized voting must have occurred, thus diluting their ability to get the outcome they desired

If so claimed, then election results could be questioned and delay the results as suits are brought to change the outcome.

I also support the position of the Maryland Municipal League who submitted the following testimony during the Senate hearings

The proposed law prohibits the imposition of election methods that impair the ability of protected class members to elect their candidates of choice. This could lead to municipalities needing to change how they elect their governing bodies from long-standing electoral methods they believe are effective or fair. Municipalities view this as an overreach that interferes with local autonomy without sufficient justification, which reduces their ability to tailor electoral systems to their specific needs and contexts.

This measure also allows the Attorney General to file legal actions to challenge alleged voting issues more easily, which could lead to a significant increase in lawsuits against municipalities. Participating in these suits, even if the municipality prevails, utilizes valuable limited resources.

I maintain that this bill could bring chaos to an election process already suspected by many not to have integrity, so please vote against HB0342.

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