



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

March 25, 2025

Committee: House Ways & Means

Bill: SB 342 - Voting Rights Act of 2025 - Counties and Municipalities

Position: Oppose

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) respectfully opposes Senate Bill 342, which undermines local control, creates legal and administrative burdens, and forces changes to election systems that local governments may not be ready to implement. MML strongly supports the protection of voting rights, especially for historically disenfranchised groups; however, this bill is an unworkable overreach for the following reasons:

Increased Legal Risk and Costs. The bill opens municipalities up to lawsuits if the election system is found to be discriminatory. The process for defending against such claims could be expensive and time-consuming. Further, the amended provision that allows the Attorney General or private individuals to bring lawsuits against municipalities could increase the frequency of legal challenges, generating additional financial and administrative burdens.

Local Control Over Election Methods. The bill limits a municipality's ability to independently choose its own election methods. It requires local governments to agree to changes, which may restrict their flexibility in determining what works best for their specific communities. Further, the bill mandates that courts consider proposed remedies but doesn't give deference to local solutions. Municipalities have the unique knowledge necessary to resolve issues internally rather than having courts impose state-driven remedies, which might not always align with local needs or preferences.

In conclusion, this bill is as an overreach of state power, as it gives courts and the Attorney General significant influence over local elections. With respect, our members are concerned that the state does not fully appreciate local context and needs when making decisions about election procedures.

For these reasons, the League respectfully requests that the Committee provide Senate Bill 342 with an unfavorable report. For more information, please contact Angelica Bailey Thupari, Director of Advocacy and Public Affairs, at angelicab@mdmunicipal.org or (443) 756-0071. Thank you for your consideration.

The Maryland Municipal League uses its collective voice to advocate, empower and protect the interests of our 160 local governments members and elevates local leadership, delivers impactful solutions for our communities, and builds an inclusive culture for the 2 million Marylanders we serve.