



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

SB 342 Voting Rights Act of 2025 – Counties and Municipalities

POSITION: Favorable

By: Linda Kohn, President

Date: March 25, 2025

The League of Women Voters was founded on the concept that voter participation is the essential element of a successful democracy. Our organization has worked for over 100 years to ensure the right to vote for every citizen. SB 342 seeks to protect Marylanders from the devastating effects that the continuing gutting of the 1065 Voting Right Act will have, as well as address the damage done by district packing and voter dilution.

SB 342 seeks to address critical issues that Maryland has been facing in regard to racial vote dilution. This would allow communities who believe that they are being unfairly split the ability to seek remedies and ultimately vote for a person who they believe represents them. In Baltimore County, this was mainly seen in 2022 when, even though the ability was there, it took a lawsuit and public pressure for the county to recognize that it was purposefully diluting the voting power of the Black community by not drawing a map with two minority-majority districts. SB 342 would give guidance on how to not only avoid that but also how to remedy it should it occur again.

Furthermore, SB 342 would give litigators the guidance they need to sue if issues arise again regarding vote dilution. According to the attorneys who represented several Maryland organizations during the Baltimore County redistricting fight, although it was obvious that the maps still did not comply with the federal Voting Rights Act, there was legal precedent to ensure that there was a remedy.¹ SB 342 would give guidance not only to those suing but also to the courts on how a violation must be rectified.

LWVMD encourages the passage of SB 342 without amendments.

LWVMD urges a favorable report on SB 342 with the additional amendments.

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<https://marylandmatters.org/2022/03/10/in-baltimore-county-redistricting-case-plaintiffs-say-new-council-map-doesnt-comply-with-voting-rights-act/>