



Testimony - SB 255, Voting Rights Act of 2026 – Counties and Municipal Corporations
Favorable
Senate Committee
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Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Feldman & Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents thousands of public service and education workers across Maryland. Our members live and work in the very counties and municipalities governed by the election systems addressed in this bill. They are parents, neighbors, and essential workers who believe deeply that democracy works best when every community has a fair and meaningful opportunity to elect leaders of their choice and to influence the decisions that shape their daily lives.

SB 255 is a necessary and timely response to ongoing threats to local voting equity. By prohibiting election methods that dilute or abridge the voting strength of protected classes, this legislation strengthens Maryland's commitment to inclusive democracy and civil rights. The bill appropriately recognizes that discriminatory impacts can exist even in the absence of discriminatory intent, and it provides clear, workable standards for courts to evaluate whether local election systems deny equal opportunity to voters.

Importantly, SB 255 aligns with well-established federal Voting Rights Act jurisprudence while addressing gaps left by recent federal court decisions that have weakened enforcement. It ensures that communities of color and language minority voters are not locked out of fair representation simply because discrimination takes subtler or structural forms at the local level.

As a labor union, SEIU Local 500 understands that political power and economic justice are deeply connected. When communities are denied fair representation, workers lose a critical voice in decisions about schools, public services, wages, and workplace protections. SB 255 helps ensure that local governments reflect the diversity and lived experiences of the people they serve—and that working families are not silenced through unfair election systems.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 255. Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to protecting voting rights and strengthening democracy in Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christopher C. Cano, MPA
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