



**Voting Rights Act of 2026-Counties and Municipal Corporations**  
**SB 255 – Senate Education, Energy, and Environmental Committee**  
**HB 350 –House Government, Labor, Elections Committee**  
**Testimony Senate & House Bill – Favorable**

**January 27, 2026**

Dear Honorable Senate Sydnor and Delegates Behler, Boyce, Change, Coley, Conaay, Crutchfield, Fair, Feldmark, Fraser-Hidalgo, Hill, Jones, Kaiser, Kaufman, Lehman, Long, Lopez, Mireku, North, Moon, Moreno, Odom, Palakovich, Carr, Pasteur, Phillips, Pruski, Roberson, Simmons, Stinnett, Taveras, Taylor, Terrasa, Toles, Turner, Wilkins, Williams, Wims, Woorman, and Young,

Thank you for introducing and sponsoring this important bill enacting voter right protections. My name is Jean Montgomery, I am a community member of Olney, MD and a District 14 resident. I am offering my written testimony today as both a private citizen and on behalf of Indivisible MoCoWoMen, a local Indivisible chapter representing over 2,500 members in Montgomery County, Maryland. I urge the Committee to **pass SB 255/HB 350, the Voting Rights Act of 2026 – Counties and Municipal Corporations**, to enact protections against racial vote dilution, voter suppression, and voter intimidation in Maryland.

I **strongly urge** the Committee to **pass SB 255/HB 350** to enact protections against racial vote dilution in Maryland. Racial vote dilution happens when electoral practices, such as at-large elections or unfair district maps, weaken the voting strength of voters of color, effectively denying them and their communities' meaningful political participation. The protections outlined in SB 255/HB 350 are essential to ensuring that all Marylanders, particularly those from historically disenfranchised communities, have the equal opportunity to elect representatives of their choice.

I **strongly urge** the Committee to **pass SB 255/HB 350** because it builds upon the federal VRA and provides a clearer and more efficient framework for eliminating vote suppression, or discriminatory barriers to the ballot. For over sixty years, the federal Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 served as the nation's most effective tool for tackling discriminatory voting practices. At its height, Section 2 of the federal VRA addressed the long history of discrimination in voting by prohibiting racial vote dilution and voter suppression and Section 5 of the federal VRA stopped discriminatory practices before they occurred through preclearance. However, federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, have severely limited the federal VRA's protections through cases like *Shelby County v. Holder (2013)*, *Brnovich v. DNC (2021)*, and *Louisiana v. Callais (2025)*. Maryland law currently contains no protection against racial vote dilution, and recent challenges to racially dilutive voting systems in Federalsburg and Baltimore County underscore the crucial need for these kinds of protections in our state. When voters of color are

systematically prevented from electing the candidates of their choice, entire communities are left without a voice in decisions that directly impact their lives. Simply put, prohibiting vote dilution helps create a more inclusive and accountable democracy.

I **strongly urge** the Committee to **pass SB 255/HB 350** because doing so would create civil private rights of action against voter intimidation and ensure that all eligible Marylanders can participate in the political process. Voter intimidation can take many forms, including harassment, deception, threats of violence, obstruction, etc., which interferes with an individual's right to vote. Even though criminal prohibitions exist, civil protections are not currently available under Maryland law. Providing them protect Marylanders and give us legal recourse should we find our voting rights infringed.

For the above stated reasons, I respectfully urge the committee members to return a **favorable report on SB 255/HB 350**. Doing so strengthens Maryland's democratic institutions, honors the legacy of the federal Voting Rights Act, protects Marylanders from racial vote dilution, voter suppression, and voter intimidation, and helps ensure that every eligible voter has an equal opportunity to participate in choosing who represents them within their local government.

Thank you,

Jean Montgomery  
Indivisible MoCoWoMen Steering Committee Member