



**Maryland Senate
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
January 27, 2026
Submitted January 23, 2026
SB 255 (FAV)**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 255, which enacts protections against racial vote dilution in Maryland. Fair Elections Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers to registration and voting through advocacy and impact litigation.

Although Maryland law features important pro-voter policies, it contains no protection against racial vote dilution. Racial vote dilution occurs when electoral practices, such as at-large elections or unfair district maps, weaken the voting strength of voters of color, effectively denying them meaningful political representation. While Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 has a long history of combatting racial vote dilution, its protections have been weakened in recent years by the federal courts. Indeed, Section 2's applicability to the redistricting process and meaningful representation for communities of color is under threat in *Louisiana v. Callais* (2025). Meanwhile, the federal government is not only failing to protect against intimidation and discrimination in our voting processes, but is actively advancing anti-voter policies.

At a time when federal voting rights protections have been weakened and enforcement has become increasingly uncertain, Maryland legislators have both the authority and the responsibility to safeguard fair and equal access to the ballot. In SB 255, Maryland has the opportunity to build on the protections provided in the federal VRA by implementing streamlined standards and procedures that both protect the freedom to vote and make this type of litigation less time-intensive and costly than litigation under the federal VRA.

In addition to protecting access to the ballot box, prohibiting vote dilution helps create a more inclusive and accountable democracy. When voters of color are systematically prevented from electing their preferred candidates, entire communities are left without a voice in decisions that directly impact their lives. Combatting vote dilution is a necessary step toward making the vision of a government that is truly of, by, and for the people a reality.

Protections against vote dilution will help ensure no eligible Marylander is left behind at the ballot box. Fair Elections Center urges swift passage of SB 255. If you would like further information, please feel free to contact Emily Davis, Counsel at Fair Elections Center, at edavis@fairelectionscenter.org.