February 12, 2021

Michael English
8005 13th Street, Unit 304
Silver Spring MD, 20910

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0767
Montgomery County Voting Measures
HB0767

My name is Michael English. I live in Silver Spring Maryland in District 20. This testimony is in support of HB0767, **Montgomery County Voting Measures.** HB0767 would help make Montgomery County's electoral system more responsive to the views of its citizens, due both to the general strength of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), and the way it would work with Montgomery County's particular hybrid council system, though I would also welcome its application for other races, such as county executive.

As I'm sure you know, my county uses a hybrid system, where there are five district councilmembers (soon to be seven thanks to the passage of ballot measure C), and four at large members. I support this system, and campaigned actively in support of ballot measure C (which added districts lowering the number each district member represents) and against ballot measure D (which would have made all councilmembers district only) because I truly feel that our hybrid system has lead to a more diverse council, and one that allows every resident to have five people advocating for them every day, not just one. This is crucial, as no two people are likely to agree on any one measure, including a constituent and their district member.

That said, this system would work even better with RCV. There is ample research and writing to suggest that in multi-winner contests, such as for Montgomery County's at large seats, RCV more accurately carries forward a voter's preferences, as they can rank their choices in order. If you really want one candidate to win the most, and then prefer multiple others to the rest of the field, you don't have to worry about this nuance being lost when your case can be made clear in your very vote. It lowers a person's need to guess about which candidate has "the best

chance to win" even if they aren't the voter's first preference, because the ability to rank their choices allows the voter to put "safer" choices as a second, third, and fourth choice, etc.

Ranked choice voting also allows the use of election thresholds to determine what ranked votes are applied when, after higher preference choices are eliminated. It's a bit much to go into here, but this piece explains it quite well. (https://www.fairvote.org/multi_winner_rcv_example) To summarize, deeply unpopular candidates are eliminated, but thanks to RCV, their supporters still get to have their full say on the council election. This not only may help to curtail extremism by allowing backup plans and less doubling down on fringe candidates, but is also simply more representative of the views of the public. Isn't that the whole point of elections?

While the county council is the first race that comes to mind, a recent county executive election with a single winner also shows the utility of an RCV system. Due to term limits imposed in 2016, it was a crowded field as several term limited councilmembers ran for county executive instead. Many of the moderate voices crowded together, and split the vote, including my first choice (George Leventhal). As a result, a relatively fringe candidate, Marc Elrich, won the primary, and ran against an even more fringe candidate, Robin Ficker, in the general. I voted for Mr. Elrich then, because he was better than Mr. Ficker in my mind, but I still strongly disagree with him on many issues, principally his denial of the need for more housing to address the affordable housing crisis in Montgomery County. If I had RCV as an option, I could have made my second and third preferences more clear in the general, as could others, and one of the more moderate voices would likely have won out.

This measure, sponsored by the Montgomery County delegation, has my full support. Please do the right thing and pass it.