

**February 16, 2021**

**Testimony on HB 767  
Montgomery County – Voting Methods MC 22-21  
Ways and Means**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 767 which would authorize Montgomery County to adopt a Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) or Approval Voting method, ranking candidates from first to last choice on the ballot, a method that has been proven a constitutionally sound system that would increase voter participation in the lawmaking and electoral process for a more robust democracy.

Currently, Takoma Park uses RCV which was approved by 83% of the voters in 2005. In a voluntary survey conducted by FairVote during Early Voting and on Election Day in 2014, 54% of city residents said their vote felt less like it was wasted, 33% said they were more inclined to vote for their preferred candidate, 49% said there were fewer examples of candidates criticizing one another. 84% said it was easy to rank candidates proving that RCV has significantly improved elections in Takoma Park and that Montgomery County and Maryland are long overdue for structural reform that would produce better outcomes for voters, candidates and elected officials.

RCV or approval voting builds majority support for candidates in multi-candidate races, inspires voters to vote their preference and avoids costly run offs. It promotes fairness because results are grounded in majority rule, fosters civility because candidates are more inclined to debate the issues, and has no spoiler effect where voting for a candidate in third place or lower splits the vote for the majority. Constituents are best served when their elected representative is able to garner majority support, while the elected official benefits from a broader base of support as well. With RCV, the relationship between Montgomery County candidates and voters would improve, improving the likelihood that elected leaders will represent their constituents' interests.

Ranked Choice Voting or Approval Voting in Montgomery County would avoid the troubling pattern of anti-democratic electoral outcomes in Montgomery County: elections that are won with less than majority support and voters who are hesitant to vote their true preference.

We urge a favorable report on HB 767.