

The Honorable Anne Kaiser, Chair
and Members of the Ways & Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: HB 767 – Voting Methods – OPPOSE

Dear Chair Kaiser and Members of the Committee,

HB 767 (MC22-21) would grant authority to the Montgomery County Council to determine the method of electing not only the County Executive and County Council but all “local” offices including Judges of the Circuit Court that Montgomery County shares with Frederick County, the States Attorney and the Sheriff. Is this appropriate? Election methods are the same for all of these offices in all counties in Maryland.

HB 767 will also set a precedent and could affect other counties in Maryland. Maryland has a direct vote system. The candidates are listed and the candidate that receives the most votes wins. The formulas or algorithms that might be used in Ranked Choice Voting are subject to manipulation that might favor one candidate or party over another.

Ranked Choice or Approval Voting will complicate the voting process and confuse voters.

- Under Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), Voters are making 3 or more choices for each position without knowing who the top-voted candidates will be in the 2nd or 3rd rounds. They are making their decision based on a hypothetical “what if” basis, not on the reality of who the top candidates are.
- Ranked Choice Voting makes the voting process more complicated. There is a drop-off in Voters voting for “down-ballot” races already. Making the process longer and more confusing will likely discourage voters from voting. It will increase wait times at the polling places for voters to choose 3 candidates for each office.
- In races with large numbers of candidates Voters, whose chosen candidates receive the fewest votes, will have their votes discarded—not even counted. Such action disenfranchises the voter.
- RCV complicates/slows vote counting and certifying elections process, while voters wait for an algorithm to calculate winner in multiple rounds. Delays/confusion undermine voters’ trust in the election system.
- “Instant Run Off” is a misnomer. If 50.1% of the vote is magic number to be elected, then hold a real “Run Off” election where every voter knows exactly who the candidates are and has an equal voice in the outcome.

Please vote for an Unfavorable Report for HB 767 – Voting Methods.

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis
P.O. Box 437
Port Republic, MD 20676