



Barbara Noveau, Executive Director, DoTheMostGood

Committee: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB0362 – Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 13-22

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 8, 2022

Bill Contact: Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grassroots organization with more than 3000 members who live in a wide range of communities—primarily in Montgomery County—from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that help ensure equity in voting, civil rights, education, and criminal justice; access to healthcare, transportation, and housing; and promote positive and trusting relationships between our communities and our state and local governments. Since December, 2016, we have been active in over 75 elections inside and outside of Maryland.

This is the sixth time we've testified in support of legislation authorizing Montgomery County to adopt ranked choice or approval voting for certain local races. Our reasons for supporting this legislation haven't changed significantly over the years, but today's national political climate demands that we strengthen the protections, and put into place enhancements that let the voice of every person be heard. Ranked Choice Voting is one of those enhancements.

Across America, 22 jurisdictions, from New York City to Takoma Park, used ranked choice voting in their most recent election. RCV was on the ballot this November in cities in Michigan, Maine and Colorado, and won in all 3. 53 jurisdictions intend to use RCV in upcoming elections. It's time for Montgomery County to join their ranks.

Thanks to a restructuring of our county council that takes effect in 2022, residents of the East County will finally have a district of their own and, with it, the opportunity to elect a council member who will put them first. Don't they also deserve a voting method that will help ensure that each person's voice is heard, and that the candidate elected is preferred by a majority of those voters?

In 2018 our County Council elections demonstrated that in a plurality-based system it is **not** unusual for the winner to be “affirmatively **disliked** by a majority of voters”. Candidates in single seat races won with 25 or 35% of the vote; winners in multiple seat races won with as little as 8% of the vote. It’s no surprise that many voters felt unheard.

We **CAN** and we **MUST** do better, not just for the East County, but for the entire county. With 2 more district seats added to the County Council in this year, we can expect another highly competitive election that would benefit greatly from RCV. Efforts to field more women and minority candidates will, as before, put many like-minded candidates into competition with each other. RCV would elevate the candidate who is approved of by the majority of voters, as opposed to the one who received the largest plurality, no matter how small it was.

By giving Montgomery County the ability to evaluate and use new voting methods, **you will empower voters** and ensure democracy continues to be open and available to all.

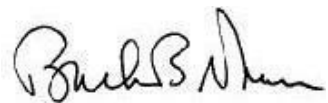
Marylanders deserve elections that are fair and utilize modern equipment to ensure the voice of voters are heard and respected. The county's Right to Vote task Force evaluated voting methods and recommended new voting methods for local elections.

You have an opportunity to **advance modern elections** that are proven, effective, and empowering for today’s voters and future generations.

In sum, RCV amplifies the voices of the people being represented, helps to ensure that the majority of voters view the winner favorably, and de-stigmatizes third party candidates, too often erroneously viewed as spoilers.

Therefore, DTMG strongly supports HB0362 and urges a FAVORABLE report on this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Barbara Noveau
Executive Director, DoTheMostGood
barbara@dtmg.org
240-338-3048