



The Honorable Wes Moore  
Governor of Maryland  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President Pro Tempore, Maryland Senate  
State House H-107  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones  
Speaker, Maryland House of Representatives  
State House H-101  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT FOR THE MARYLAND VOTING RIGHTS ACT**

Dear Governor Moore, Senate President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

We write to express our strong support for the Maryland Voting Rights Act (“MDVRA”). This landmark legislation would address discrimination against voters of color in Maryland and immediately position the Free State as a national leader on protecting the right to vote. For these reasons, the MDVRA is a top priority for the undersigned civil and voting rights organizations.

As we approach the tenth anniversary of the Supreme Court’s disastrous *Shelby County* decision that undercut the federal Voting Rights Act,<sup>1</sup> many states are moving backwards on ensuring free,

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<sup>1</sup> *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 529 (2013).

fair, and nondiscriminatory elections.<sup>2</sup> Following the historic election of Maryland's first Black governor and attorney general, we need our leaders to stand up for equal, inclusive democracy.

Despite Maryland's progressive reputation, many discriminatory barriers to equal participation still exist in the state for voters of color and voters whose first language is not English, particularly at the local level. Maryland's history of discrimination includes English literacy tests, property ownership requirements and entitlements linked to voting, as well as laws that carry forward discrimination in the criminal legal system into our democracy, some of which are still in force today. In addition, some local jurisdictions<sup>3</sup> still use at-large elections which can empower a white majority to capture most or all seats, even where there is a substantial population of Black, Indigenous, and other voters of color.

The MDVRA will set a new standard for protecting the right to vote by:

- Providing new legal tools to fight discriminatory voting rules and election systems in court.
- Launching a “preclearance” program that requires places with records of discrimination to prove that proposed voting changes will not harm voters of color before they can go into effect.
- Expanding language assistance for voters with limited English proficiency.
- Creating strong protections against voter intimidation, deception, or obstruction.
- Establishing a central hub for election data and demographic information that will empower officials and community members to ensure accessible elections.

The MDVRA builds upon successful laws already passed in California, Washington, Oregon, Virginia, and New York—which enacted the [John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York](#) in 2022. Similar bills are also under consideration in Connecticut and New Jersey this session. The MDVRA will carry forward this momentum and become one of the most comprehensive state-level voting rights acts in the country.

Now is Maryland's time to lead. We encourage you to prioritize, pass, and fully fund the MDVRA this legislative session, and we stand ready to work with you to secure this victory for all Maryland voters.

Sincerely,

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<sup>2</sup> Brennan Center for Justice, [Voting Laws Roundup: February 2023](#) (February 22, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> Some examples of municipalities that still have at-large election systems include Federalsburg in Caroline County, Aberdeen in Harford County, and La Plata in Charles County.

ACLU of Maryland  
Common Cause Maryland  
NAACP Legal Defense Fund  
Campaign Legal Center  
NAACP Maryland State Conference  
Movement Advancement Project  
Maryland League of Conservation Voters  
Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.  
FairVote Action  
National Council of Jewish Women,  
Maryland Action Team  
Caucus of African-American Leaders  
The Arc Maryland  
Public Justice Center  
No Boundaries Coalition  
Advance Maryland  
Mothers On The Move  
Lower Shore Progressive Caucus  
Declaration for American Democracy  
Coalition  
Indivisible Central Maryland  
AAAsk, LLC  
Definitive Mechanical  
Community Development Network of  
Maryland

AFT-Maryland  
Indivisible Howard County  
Public Citizen  
Maryland Center on Economic Policy  
DemCast USA  
Fair Elections Center  
Human Rights Campaign  
Hip Hop Caucus  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote  
(APIAVote)  
Demos  
Allen AME Church  
DoTheMostGood  
Center for Popular Democracy  
Cedar Lane Environmental Justice Ministry  
Council on American-Islamic Relations  
Stand Up America  
The Talking Drum Incorporated  
Secure Elections Network  
Franciscan Action Network  
STAR Scholars  
The Baltimore City Civilian Review Board  
End Citizens United/Let America Vote  
Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis  
and Anne Arundel County  
Quaker Voice of Maryland  
PETA  
Indivisible Howard Count