



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
Maryland Federation of Republican Women
PO Box 6040, Annapolis MD 21401
Email: eee437@comcast.net

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chairman
And Members of the Committee on Education, Energy and Environment
Senate of Maryland, Annapolis, Maryland

RE: **SB 0878** – Voting Rights Act of 2023 – Counties and Municipalities - **UNFAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Feldman and Committee Members,

The 1,426 members of the Maryland Federation of Republican Women strongly OPPOSE SB 0878 – Voting Rights Act of 2023 – Counties and Municipalities. This proposed legislation is very likely to cause chaos in the elections of many counties and municipalities. It will override county charters enacted by ALL the voters of those jurisdictions and have the Anne Arundel Circuit Court decide instead.

SB 0878 provides for jurisdictions to abandon their legally chosen methods of electing their county or municipal officials by districts or at-large or a combination of district and at-large representation and replace them with proportional ranked-choice voting, cumulative voting, and limited voting without defining those voting methods. Ranked-choice voting is confusing to voters, and it takes much longer to make 3 or more choices for each office. This cannot be an informed decision without knowing who the remaining candidates will be in each round of voting. This could lead to drop off in voting in down-ballot races such as Board of Education. It also prolongs the counting and certification of elections and can lead to reduced voter confidence in election outcomes.

SB 0878 gives special preference to “protected class”, defined as “a class of citizens who are members of a race, color, or language minority group”. All voters must be treated equally and all voters, regardless of color, race, or language preference, must have an equal voice in all elections.

Pages 6 -7 provide for 2 or more protected classes that are politically cohesive within the election district of the local government to be able to bring a combined claim of discrimination without requiring evidence that each protected class is separately polarized from other voters and does not require evidence that the local government discriminated against the protected class voters or any other evidence of discrimination.

Page 10 – 15.5-204 (A) (1) will allow an organization whose mission would be frustrated by a violation or who would expend resources in order to fulfill its mission under this subtitle to bring an action to overturn election methods duly enacted by voters. An organization, including an organization formed outside of Maryland, would have more rights than Maryland citizens.



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SB 0878 will allow the Court to “reasonably increase the size of the legislative body” and order special elections or change the election process. These are decisions that should be made by the state or county legislative body, not the court. SB 0878 will hurt, not help, voter participation in elections.

Please give an **UNFAVORABLE** Report to **SB 0878**.

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis
Legislative Chairman