



**Barbara Noveau, Founder, DoTheMostGood**

**Committee:** Ways and Means

**Testimony on:** HB0344 Montgomery County - Voting Methods (MC 3-23)

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** February 7, 2023

**Bill Contact:** Delegate Julie Palakovich-Carr

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grassroots organization with members in all districts in Montgomery County as well as several neighboring counties. DTMG supports legislation and activities that protect the fundamental rights of all Maryland residents, and which promote equity across all our diverse communities. HB0344 directly addresses these goals.

This is the sixth time we have testified in support of legislation authorizing Montgomery County to adopt a ranked choice or approval voting method for certain local races. Our reasons for supporting this legislation have not really changed over the years. However, this past year we have witnessed in this country the largest assault against voting rights, and numerous struggles to protect those rights for all citizens. These assaults have exacerbated the situation to the point that we must codify these rights and implement improved processes to allow the voice of every person to be heard. As we saw again in the 2022 elections, where Ranked Choice Voting has been implemented, marginalized voters found their voices and states realized significant savings in time and dollars in conducting and completing their elections.

This enabling legislation will allow Montgomery County to exercise its autonomy to improve elections and the fairness of their outcomes to empower the voice of all voters. As of December 2022, 62 American jurisdictions have RCV in place, reaching approximately 13 million voters. This includes 2 states, 2 counties and 58 cities. Military and overseas voters cast RCV ballots in federal runoff elections in 6 states. 51 jurisdictions used RCV in their most recent elections. It's time for Montgomery County to join their ranks.

In Montgomery County we endured yet another primary contest for County Executive that once again was so close that expensive, time-consuming recounts were required and did not reveal the winner until August 24th, over a month after the primary ended on July 19th. Having no reason to think the situation will be any different next time, given the diversity and divisions in the county, it would be an utter failure of the legislature if it does not authorize RCV for Montgomery County before the next election cycle.

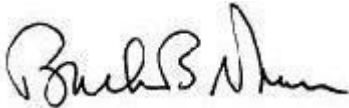
This year's bill enumerates, in addition to County Executive, Member of the County Council, Judge of The Circuit Court; State's Attorney; Register of Wills Sheriff; and Member of The Board of Education to become RCV elections. Highlighting the reach of offices reinforces the importance

of this enabling legislation beyond a single office to many other important positions.

In sum, in addition to the other reasons we have enumerated in past testimony, the need to implement RCV in Maryland via enabling legislation for Montgomery County this session is critical to prevent the erosion of democratic rule by making sure every voter's vote is counted.

DTMG strongly supports HB0344 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on the bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Noveau". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

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