



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 344 (MC 3-23)
Montgomery County - Voting Methods

This is enabling legislation to allow Montgomery County to adopt ranked choice voting or approval voting for local elected offices.

MC 3-23 has the support of the County Executive and the County Council. The Montgomery County House Delegation unanimously passed prior versions of this bill in 2022, 2021, and 2019.

Background

Ranked choice and approval voting are designed to give voters more ability to express their preferences on their ballot and to ensure that election results truly reflect the electorate's desires. Such election systems ensure that the winning candidate has the approval of a majority of voters by taking into account their top preferences, not just their first choice. In doing so, the problem of a candidate winning without a majority is avoided.

Beyond simply providing more choices for voters, ranked choice voting and approval voting provide many advantages to the election and campaign process:

- Deters negative campaigning¹
- Encourages robust policy debates, in which candidates must appeal to voters not just as a first choice but as a second or third choice
- Can reduce the cost of conducting elections² and
- Most importantly, promotes diverse representation.³

Ranked Choice Voting is Catching On

Nationwide, 62 jurisdictions now use ranked choice voting, with many using ranked choice voting in elections this past November.

¹ https://www.fairvote.org/research_rcvcampaigncivility

² <https://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/RankedChoiceVoting-FPI-Brief.pdf>

³ https://www.fairvote.org/the_alternative_vote_can_increase_representation_of_women_and_people_of_color_in_us_elections

The states of Alaska and Maine currently use ranked choice voting for statewide elections. Additionally, Utah and Virginia passed enabling legislation in recent years to allow municipalities to opt in to ranked choice voting.

Ranked choice voting is on the rise. Several cities, including Seattle and Portland, approved ballot initiatives this year to adopt ranked choice voting. Voters in Nevada approved a ballot initiative this fall that will adopt the voting system statewide.

Other cities already using ranked choice voting include Takoma Park, New York City, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Oakland, Santa Fe, Boulder, Ann Arbor, and San Francisco, just to name a few.

Additionally, Democratic Parties in five states conducted their 2020 presidential primary election using ranked choice voting. And both Republicans and Democrats have used ranked choice voting for internal party elections.