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**Committee:** Ways and Means  
**Testimony on:** HB 334 Voting Systems – Ranked Choice Voting and Inclusion of City of Takoma Park Municipal Elections on the State Ballot MC 7-23  
**Position:** Favorable  
**Hearing Date:** February 7, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on HB 334. The bill will require that any new voting system certified by the State Board of Elections be capable of handling ranked choice voting. The City of Takoma Park already uses ranked choice voting in municipal elections conducted separately but at the same time as regular state elections. HB 334 includes provisions that would apply if the City of Takoma Park makes a request to consolidate their municipal elections on the same ballot with state elections.

The Sierra Club and its members care about both the natural and human environments, including ending racial and social injustice. We believe the single-round, winner-take-all voting method has problems, such as allowing a candidate to win a multi-candidate race with a plurality that is far short of a majority. We support alternative electoral methods like ranked choice voting that better reflect the diversity of public opinion.

Research has shown that ranked choice voting, when compared to single-round plurality methods, can result in more candidacies and winning candidates who are women and particularly women of color.<sup>1</sup> Research also supports the premise that campaigns tend to be more civil and less negative when ranked choice voting is in use.<sup>2</sup>

We believe it is important to enact a requirement that any new voting system be capable of handling ranked choice voting before the state begins to consider an expensive procurement for new voting equipment.

We urge a favorable report on HB 334.

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah John et al., “[The alternative vote: Do changes in single-member voting systems affect descriptive representation of women and minorities?](#)”, Electoral Studies, Vol. 54, August 2018, 90-102. The results of this peer-reviewed study are also described in “[The Impact of Ranked Choice Voting on Representation: How Ranked Choice Voting Affects Women and People of Color Candidates in California](#)”, published by Representation2020.

<sup>2</sup> Todd Donovan et al., “[Campaign civility under preferential and plurality voting](#)”, Electoral Studies, Vol. 42, June 2016, 157-163.