Ranked Choice Voting Makes Every Maryland Vote Count

This bill would authorize **Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)** only in the **2028 Presidential Primary Election**. The goal is to enhance accurate representation, provide voters with more choices, and ensure their votes count even if their top choice candidate does not win.

WHAT THE BILL WOULD DO

- **Only Apply to the Presidential Primary:** This bill allows Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) only in the primary election for the office of President of the United States, starting in 2028.

- **Let Political Parties Choose:** Each political party can decide whether to use RCV in their primary for President.

- **Implement Voter Education:** The bill provides for a statewide voter education campaign to inform voters about how Ranked Choice Voting works.

- **Equip Maryland State Board of Elections:** The State Board of Elections will regulate and review any necessary technology or equipment to implement Ranked Choice Voting.

- **Require a Study and Report:** After the 2028 presidential primary, the State Board of Elections will study and report on the use of Ranked Choice Voting to evaluate its effectiveness and impact.

WHAT THE BILL DOES NOT DO

- **Does Not Impact Other Elections:** This bill is limited to the presidential primary election. It does not authorize or affect Ranked Choice Voting for general elections or any other Maryland election.

- **Does Not Expand Without Further Legislation:** Any use of Ranked Choice Voting in other federal, state, or local elections would require separate legislative approval or a constitutional amendment.

BENEFITS OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING

- **Prevents Wasted Votes:** In primaries with early and mail-in voting, RCV ensures votes are not wasted. For example, in 2020, 6% of Maryland Democratic primary votes were discarded when their chosen candidates became non-viable. With RCV, votes for dropped-out candidates automatically transfer to the next preference.

- **Ensures Majority Winners:** RCV ensures majority-supported candidates in the GOP primary. In Democratic primaries, proportional delegate allocation enables a broader representation of support within the party.

- **Promotes Candidate Diversity:** Under RCV, winning candidates owe their support to more diverse constituencies of voters and are committed to making sure all voters feel represented and heard in their communities.

- **Increases Participation from Military and Overseas Voters:** RCV is particularly valuable for early and absentee voters, ensuring their preferences are counted even if their first-choice candidate is no longer viable.

How RCV Works in Presidential Primaries

In 2020, five Democratic state parties used RCV ballots for presidential primaries. Voters ranked candidates at high rates and with almost no errors. 98% of voters in RCV states saw their vote contribute to a candidate winning delegates, compared to just 88% in single-choice primary states. The positive experiences led to even more states considering RCV primaries in 2024.

COUNTING THE VOTES

Democratic Presidential Primary: Votes from the first round are tallied, and if every candidate receives above 15% of the vote, results are final, and every candidate receives delegates in proportion to their vote share. The vote threshold is set by the party. If any candidate does not receive above 15%, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. That candidate's votes are then redistributed to the remaining candidates respective of their voters' second preferences. This process continues until all remaining candidates are above the 15% threshold.

Republican Presidential Primary: Votes from the first round are tallied, and if no candidate receives over 50% of the vote—a threshold set by the party—then the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. That candidate's votes are then redistributed to the remaining candidates respective of their voters' second preferences. This process continues on until one candidate secures 50% of the vote. That candidate receives all the delegates.

President
Rank up to 5 choices. Mark only one oval in each column.

	Choice				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Charlene Franz	○	○	○	○	○
Gerard Harris	○	○	○	○	○
Linda Bargmann	○	○	○	○	○
Barbara Adcock	○	○	○	○	○
Carrie Steel-Loy	○	○	○	○	○
Frederick Sharp	○	○	○	○	○
Ashley Hildebrand	○	○	○	○	○
Martin Patterson	○	○	○	○	○
James Lian	○	○	○	○	○

Example Ballot

Voters' first choices are counted. If there are candidates below the 15% threshold, the last-place candidate is eliminated. Voters who ranked that candidate "1st" have their vote count for their next choice. This process continues until every candidate is above 15%. Every candidate above 15% receives delegates in proportion to their share of the vote.

RCV Ballots in a Democratic (Proportional) Presidential Primary