

February 24, 2025

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Maryland Senate

Re: SB0383 Elections - Ranked-Choice Voting in Contests for Presidential  
Nomination and Certification of Election-Supporting Technology

Dear Mr. Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and members of the committee:

I am a Frederick County resident who writes frequently for national and Maryland audiences on redistricting, electoral methods, and other questions of election law and practice. While I often write in my capacity as a senior fellow at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C., I want to emphasize that my comments here represent my views alone.

I write to urge approval of SB 0383, authorizing the use of ranked choice voting in presidential primaries. I spoke in person at the hearing last year, but probably cannot attend this year's hearing. Ranked choice enables a closer match between voters' in-depth opinions and election results. In the specific context of presidential primaries, it has a unique and valuable feature: if some candidates drop out between primary and convention, RCV allows those candidates' voters to count for their second choice candidates rather than either not be counted or be made the subject of horse trading behind the scenes. This would elevate Maryland voters' voice in the national process.

To me an important element of introducing RCV for presidential primaries in Maryland is that it be voluntary on the part of the parties. If one party prefers not to use it, its wishes should be respected, even if the other party goes ahead. I believe the bill this year is consistent with this principle, but it can't hurt to make it explicit.

This parallels another theme about RCV in Maryland, which is that it often combines favorably with local option. Some communities are enthusiastic about adopting ranked choice, others quite skeptical. We do not have to adopt one rule for both. If Montgomery County wishes to use RCV for county executive races, but Wicomico or Harford do not, each can go its own way. The same is true with presidential primaries between Democratic and Republican voters, who may have different views.

Thank you for hearing my opinion. I would be happy to answer any questions by email at [walterkolson@gmail.com](mailto:walterkolson@gmail.com) or phone at 301-882-7313.

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