



Maryland Forward Party

January 31, 2025

Maryland Forward Party

PJ Benenati, Chair

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SB 0262:

Election Law – Special Elections

Position: Favorable

Dear Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Forward Party and our 6,000 Maryland supporters. Forward Party is among the fastest growing political organizations in the United States and in Maryland. Our organization is dedicated to promoting and enhancing our democracy in Maryland. We also believe that all Maryland taxpayers should have an opportunity to be heard. In Maryland, we have enacted closed primary elections, which currently prohibit over 20% of Maryland taxpayers from participating in primary elections, which is the most broad and often the most important election, particularly in single-party dominated districts. We believe that these principles should also be applied to Special Elections in Maryland.

SB 0262 is pre-filed as an Emergency Bill that allows county councils the ability to not host primary elections for special elections and to only host a general election. The Maryland Forward Party views this Favorably.



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Eliminating a closed primary election for county council and county executive special elections, would dramatically open up access to these elections, access that is otherwise currently closed. It would allow for more competition among candidates, where those candidates are cross-compared to other candidates from the same and other political backgrounds. This would increase the need for these candidates to appeal to a broader audience and would ultimately reduce polarized partisan voting. More choices result in better representation for our communities.

We believe that all voices should be heard in our elections. This means both candidates and Maryland voters. A single general special election would allow all political parties to produce candidates and would also allow all Maryland taxpayers to participate in the vote. By eliminating closed primary special elections, we allow all Marylanders to participate.

Special Elections are expensive. This measure offers a cost effective solution that will reduce the funding cost, so that those funds can be better used in more productive ways in our communities.

This bill also allows for drop boxes to be used in special elections, which will increase access to all members in the community. Dropboxes are safe and reliable mechanisms for voting and should be allowed for Special Elections.

Respectfully

PJ Benenati, Maryland Forward Party, Chair