



**Maryland Senate
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 26, 2025
Submitted February 24, 2025
SB 342 (FAV with amendments)**


Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 342, which prohibits vote dilution. Fair Elections Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers to registration and voting through advocacy and impact litigation.

Although Maryland law features important pro-voter policies, it contains no protection against racial vote dilution. Racial vote dilution occurs when electoral practices, such as at-large elections or unfair district maps, weaken the voting strength of voters of color, effectively denying them meaningful political representation. While Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 has a long history of combatting racial vote dilution and voter suppression, its protections have been weakened in recent years by the federal courts. The strongest version of SB 342 builds on the protections provided in the federal VRA by implementing streamlined standards and procedures that both protect the freedom to vote and make this type of litigation less time-intensive and costly than litigation under the federal VRA.

In addition to protecting access to the ballot box, prohibiting vote dilution helps create a more inclusive and accountable democracy. When voters of color are systematically prevented from electing their preferred candidates, entire communities are left without a voice in decisions that directly impact their lives. Combatting vote dilution is a necessary step toward making the vision of a government that is truly of, by, and for the people a reality.

Protections against vote dilution, along with the rest of the Maryland Voting Rights Act package, will help ensure no eligible Marylander is left behind at the ballot box. Fair Elections Center urges swift passage of this bill with amendments. If you would like further information, please feel free to contact Michelle Kanter Cohen, Policy Director and Senior Counsel at Fair Elections Center, at mkantercohen@fairelectionscenter.org.

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