

Testimony from:  
Deb Otis

**In SUPPORT of** HB1043 and HB1044  
February 21, 2025  
Maryland House Ways and Means Committee

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing to express FairVote Action's support for HB1043 and HB1044, which would address voter suppression, vote dilution, and preclearance as part of the Maryland Voting Rights Act (VRA). These crucial components of the Maryland VRA would address discrimination against voters of color and position Maryland as a national leader on protecting the right to vote.

With a U.S. Supreme Court that seems intent on eliminating federal voting rights protections, the passage of state-level Voting Rights Acts is the most effective tool to protect and promote the franchise of all Americans. Since California passed the first state Voting Rights Act in 2001, New York, Connecticut, Washington, Virginia, Oregon, and Minnesota have passed their own state VRA legislation too.

The Maryland VRA would go above and beyond the protections provided by federal law and ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to participate in the political process. HB1043 and HB1044 are important components of the Maryland VRA:

- HB1043 protects voters against voter suppression and vote dilution.
- HB1043 allows localities and courts multiple options to remedy violations of the voting rights protections in the Maryland VRA. There is no one-size-fits all approach to ensure that every voter's voice is heard, so it is important to give courts appropriate flexibility to tailor remedies to local conditions and the nature of the violation.
- The preclearance provisions in HB1044 will make it harder for local governments to change voting procedures in ways that harm voter access.
- HB1044 would use state power to prevent bad actors from intimidating or harassing voters.

Once again, I urge you to support both HB1043 and HB1044.

FairVote Action is available to answer any other questions from the committee or provide additional data. You can reach me at dotis@fairvoteaction.org and my FairVote Action colleagues at info@fairvoteaction.org.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Director of Policy and Research at FairVote Action