



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**House Bill 174 Special Elections to Fill a Vacancy in Office
Ways and Means Committee – January 28, 2025
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2025 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic clubs in our county with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of HB 174. We support this bill because it will increase the number of legislators elected by citizens of their district. In Montgomery County, 34% of current Delegates (8) and Senators (4) were first appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of a partisan central committee.

The current practice is undemocratic and unacceptable. Appointment confers on the appointee unfair advantages in stature, communications, and fundraising that no challenger will possess. In Montgomery County, that advantage is conferred by a vote of 25 Central Committee members, only two of whom are guaranteed to live in the district. In some cases, citizens are deprived of their right to vote for their legislators for almost four years.

Some ask about "cost" and "inconvenience." Such factors do not justify removing the franchise from voters. With the widespread use of mail-in voting, special elections can be held far more easily and with less cost and inconvenience than might have been the case even a few years ago. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 25 states respect that open and fair elections are the bedrock of democracy and fill their legislative vacancies with special elections. It is time for Maryland to join them.

We ask for your support for HB 174 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Tazeen Ahmad
WDC President

Lynn Olson
WDC Advancing
Democracy in Maryland
Subcommittee

Cynthia Rubenstein
WDC Advocacy Chair