



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 1044 Maryland Voting Rights Act of 2025 - Preclearance and Voter Intimidation and Obstruction

POSITION – Support

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes that voters should be able to participate in the democratic process without discrimination, harassment, intimidation, obstruction, or deception.

With the growing unrest around politics, elections and voting have become a lightning rod of doubt and distrust. Harassment and intimidation of voters and election officials are an increasing threat. This has led to organized efforts to deceive voters with mis- and dis-information and cast doubt on our election methods, particularly those methods that we see being utilized more frequently in communities of color. This can include targeted efforts to misrepresent the day of an election and, as seen in some states, to go as far as setting up fake ballot drop boxes.

HB 1044 addresses these problems in two ways.

First, it identifies jurisdictions at high risk for voting discrimination based on past voting or civil rights violations, voter participation disparities, or discrimination in the criminal legal system that can lead to disenfranchisement. Then, it provides a streamlined process for getting expert review of proposed changes to ensure they do not discriminate against any voters based on race.

Second, HB 1044 provides robust civil protections against voter intimidation, deception, and obstruction to complement existing criminal prohibitions. Critically, this includes empowering voters or election officials to protect themselves against threats and abuse. This provision builds upon Section 11(b) of the federal Voting Rights Act but is more expansive in two key ways. It directly addresses the increasing problem of voter deception. It also allows voters to receive financial compensation from those who harm them. More than nine-in-ten (91%) Maryland voters [support](#) protections against harassment and intimidation.



While Maryland has been and continues to be a leader in voting rights and protections, it cannot protect against the onslaught of attacks seen at the federal level. Now is the time to act and set up these safeguards.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 1044.