

**Sponsor Testimony**

**Ranked Choice Voting - HB 1094**

**Delegate Aaron Kaufman**

**February 24, 2025**

**Ways and Means**

Good morning, Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and esteemed colleagues. I am Delegate Aaron Kaufman, representing District 18, Montgomery County.

I am introducing this bill, HB 1094, on behalf of the Montgomery County house delegation regarding Ranked Choice Voting (HB 1094, MC 9-25). I want to thank Delegate Julie Palakovich-Carr for taking the lead on this issue for several years and now passing the baton to me. This is the second year that I have the responsibility to bring this issue forward.

The Montgomery County House Delegation unanimously passed prior versions of this bill in 2024, 2022, 2021 and in 2019. This bill has the support of the Montgomery County Executive and all members of the Montgomery County Council. This bill has also been endorsed by 17 organizations including Common Cause Maryland, League of Women Voters, and the Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club. Ranked Choice Voting also has the support of Senate President Bill Ferguson who was quoted in an article in Maryland Matters in October of

2023, which states, “I am almost certain that ranked-choice voting is the way to go... but more education is needed.”

This bill would allow the Montgomery County Council, should they so choose, to adopt ranked choice voting for the election of local offices.

Ranked Choice Voting allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference rather than selecting just one. After all votes are cast, if no candidate has a majority, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Voters who picked the eliminated candidate as their first choice then can have their vote counted for their second choice. This process continues until one candidate has a majority of the votes.

Opponents of this bill have raised concerns about this process confusing voters. In a study of ranked choice voting in municipal elections, researchers from the University of Sydney found ranked choice voting did not negatively affect turnout. <sup>1</sup>Ranked choice voting doesn’t complicate the process for voters; it allows them to better voice their opinion: voters would still be able to select only one candidate if they want to. When making decisions, people are often forced to settle for their second choice, why shouldn’t we have the same opportunity in elections?

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<sup>1</sup> 1. Eamon McGinn, Effect of instant run-off voting on participation and civility, August 10, 2020, [http://eamonmcginn.com.s3-website-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/papers/IRV\\_in\\_Minneapolis.pdf](http://eamonmcginn.com.s3-website-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/papers/IRV_in_Minneapolis.pdf).

In November 2024, the District of Columbia voted for [Initiative 83](#) or the Make All Votes Count Act of 2024, allowing registered independents to participate in [party primaries](#) and implementing ranked choice voting in all presidential, federal, and district elections. Ranked choice voting is also used in Alaska and Maine for state and federal elections, and many other municipalities across the country. We can learn from their examples when implementing ranked choice voting in Montgomery County.

Ranked choice voting forces candidates to better represent all voters. In Montgomery County, primaries often decide the outcome of elections. Candidates often win in crowded primaries without forming a majority and then go on to win an uncontested general election without ever receiving a true mandate. Ranked choice voting makes it impossible to be elected without a majority of voters; forcing candidates to build consensus and better reflect the will of the people.

Ranked choice voting is catching on across the country because it allows people to better voice their opinions.

I ask for a favorable report on HB 1094 MC 9-25. Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions.