

Ways and Means Committee

HB 215 – Ranked-Choice Voting in Contests for Presidential Nomination and Certification of Election-Supporting Technology

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: January 28, 2025

I write on behalf of RepresentUs to support HB 215. House Bill 215 would authorize the State Board of Elections to use ranked-choice voting for presidential primary elections beginning in 2028. Ranked-choice voting (RCV) is a voting method that allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference.

Ranked-choice voting is used in elections across the United States, from local offices to the presidency. It has many advantages, such as producing winners with broad public support and incentivizing civil campaigns, but there are two reasons why it is particularly well-suited for presidential primaries.

First, primary candidates frequently drop out of the race before every state has held a primary. This can happen after a state's primary voters have already cast their ballots through absentee or early voting. Under the current system, voters who cast ballots for a candidate who subsequently drops out of the race no longer have a voice in the nomination process. Under RCV, however, voters whose first choice drops out can still have their ballot count for their next choice. Voters would no longer be punished for supporting a candidate whose campaign ends earlier than they hoped.

Second, without an incumbent constitutionally eligible to run again, both major parties could have large candidate fields in 2028. A crowded primary under the current voting method could see most or all of a state's delegates go to a candidate who has won only a relatively small share of votes in the primary. This could lead to public dissatisfaction with the process and the elevation of extreme candidates who do not represent the voters. Ranked-choice voting would ensure Maryland's delegates would be awarded to candidates with broad support among Marylanders.

We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 215.

Sincerely,

David O'Brien
Legislative Director
RepresentUs