



**TESTIMONY FOR HB1043**  
**MARYLAND VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 2025 – VOTER SUPPRESSION AND VOTE DILUTION**

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Smith

**Committee:** Ways and Means

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB1043 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

While Maryland is a state that can generally be proud of its record of inclusivity and accessibility in the voting process, there are areas in Maryland that continue to make it harder to vote, particularly for people of color. This bill, if enacted, would restore the full power of the Federal Voting Rights Act. Specifically, it would –

- Requiring additional transparency in making voting changes such as public notification and input;
- Prevent voting discrimination before it occurs by requiring counties and other jurisdictions with a demonstrated history of discrimination to get pre-approval of certain voting changes from the Attorney General or a court;
- Expand protections for voters who don't speak English as their primary language;
- Protect voters against intimidation and deceptive practices;
- Make it easier for voters experiencing discrimination to fight back in court; and
- Add critical research and enforcement tools, such as a statewide database of demographics and voting rules.

Our members want to see Maryland's voting system rise to the level that was envisioned in the original Federal Voting Rights Act. We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.