

SB 255/ HB 0350

Voting Rights Act of 2026 – Counties and Municipal Corporations

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and members,

St. Mary's County NAACP

The St. Mary's County NAACP strongly urges the Committee to pass SB255 to enact protections against racial vote dilution in Maryland. Racial vote dilution happens when electoral practices, such as at-large elections or unfair district maps, weaken the voting strength of voters of color, effectively denying them and their communities' meaningful political participation. The protections outlined in SB 255 are essential to ensuring that all Marylanders, including St. Mary's County with an historically disenfranchised community, have the equal opportunity to elect representatives of their choice.

The current St. Mary's County Elections system for County Commissioner silences individual voices of the four commissioner districts with the county and replaces the voices with those of the majority party which disenfranchises St. Mary's County Communities. This is undemocratic and leave voters unrepresented in the local government within each election cycle.

When commissioners obtain votes from the whole county, parts of the county are neglected.

The current system violates the spirit of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965, Section 2 of the federal VRA which addresses the long history of discrimination in voting by voter suppression and Section 5 of the federal VRA which stopped discriminatory practices. The General Assembly can make a change now.

Voters in St. Mary's County, Oakville (District 3) and Lexington Park (District 4) are disenfranchised because the elected commissioners are not concerned with those districts needs which leaves the districts underrepresented. If officials are elected to represent their districts and not the entire County, it would make for a truer democratic representation for each St. Mary's County District. District needs, experiences and voices would be heard of which the current system of being elected by an entire county prevents and district voters can hold their commissioner accountable at the ballot box.

I ran for County Commissioner in 2018, and it was an unsuccessful campaign because of the current flawed system of being elected by the entire county. My district is now underrepresented because the elected commissioner is interested in other areas of the county and not the district he represents. My district is unable to vote the representatives out due to The Flawed System. You can change this flawed system now. In closing, I am asking for a favorable report.