

02/25/2026

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**TESTIMONY ON SB#0800- POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting**

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0800, **Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting**

This bill will have two purposes. It will study alternative methods to improve how we elect our leaders and create a task force for that study. The report on that study can guide Maryland and the General Assembly session in 2028 to adopt better processes for the conduct of elections in Maryland.

The Election Science Organization defines *What is Approval Voting?*<sup>1</sup>

Approval voting is a method in which voters are allowed to select any number of candidates they approve of, rather than just one. In essence, it offers voters the opportunity to express their support for multiple candidates, without having to rank them in any specific order. The candidate with the highest overall approval, or the most votes, wins the election. Consequently, approval voting promotes consensus-building and diminishes polarization among voters, as candidates must strive to appeal to a wider range of supporters to secure victory in elections.

Ranked Vote has studied *Understanding Ranked Choice Voting - Pros and Cons*<sup>2</sup> and answered why the cons are not realistic.

Ranked choice voting allows you to show the *strength* of your preference amongst a set of choices. You order your choices from most preferred to least and cast your vote. That's all there is to it.

Advantages of Ranked Choice Voting

- Determines the candidate with the strongest support
- Encourages civil campaigning
- Reduces wasted votes
- Eliminates the need for multiple elections

This bill will establish the Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting; and require the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by December 1, 2027.

This Task Force can provide the data needed for an intelligent decision on how to proceed in Maryland to address these possible changes to voting in our state.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0800.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://electionscience.org/education/approval-voting>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rankedvote.co/guides/understanding-ranked-choice-voting/pros-and-cons-of-rcv>