

TESTIMONY ON Senate Bill 255– FAVORABLE

Sample Testimony on SB 255 cross-filed with HB 350

Voting Rights Act of 2026 – Counties and Municipal Corporations

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

January 27, 2026

My name is Mindie Flamholz. I have been a resident of Baltimore County for over 40 years and a resident of Maryland for over 72 ½ years of my 73 years of age. I strongly urge your committee to pass SB 255 to enact protections against racial vote dilution in Maryland.

As you know, 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, particularly those from historically disenfranchised communities, have the equal opportunity to elect representatives of their choice.

Meanwhile, the federal government not only is failing to protect against intimidation and discrimination in our voting processes, it is actively advancing anti-voter policies. At a time when federal voting rights protections have been weakened and enforcement has become increasingly uncertain, Maryland legislators have both the authority and the responsibility to safeguard fair and equal access to the ballot.

SB 255 meets this perilous moment by building on the protections provided in the federal VRA with streamlined standards and procedures designed to both protect the freedom to vote and to make this type of litigation less time-intensive and costly than similar litigation under the federal VRA.

Maryland law currently contains no protection against racial vote dilution, and recent challenges to racially dilutive voting systems in Federalsburg and Baltimore County underscore the crucial need for these kinds of protections in our state.

Combatting vote dilution is an important and necessary step towards making a vision of a government that is truly of, by, and for the people a reality. When voters of color are systematically prevented from electing the candidates of their choice, entire communities are left without a voice in decisions that directly impact their lives. Simply put, prohibiting vote dilution helps create a more inclusive and accountable democracy.

SB 255 strengthens Maryland's democratic institutions, honors the legacy of the federal Voting Rights Act, and helps ensure that every eligible voter has an equal opportunity to participate in choosing who represents us within their local government.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 255.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Stay safe and healthy.

Mindie Flamholz