



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**HB4 496 - Election Law - Unaffiliated Voters - Open Primary Elections  
Government, Labor, and Elections February 11, 2026  
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2026 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic clubs in our county with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials. **WDC respectfully requests you pass House Bill 496 and open primary elections to otherwise eligible voters who are unaffiliated with a political party.**

Maryland is a state with “closed” primaries; to vote in the primary elections, legal eligibility and registration are not enough—a voter must be affiliated with the party of the primary. This is true even though primary elections are funded by the public, not the party. [But nearly 1 in 4 Maryland voters are registered, but unaffiliated.](#)

In many parts of Maryland, democratic candidates have won elections so regularly and emphatically that the primary election is the election that matters most. For example, District 18 in Montgomery County has elected only Democrats to the House of Delegates for 52 years. In other words, **almost a quarter of Maryland's lawfully registered voters are effectively disenfranchised by our closed primary system.**

This must change. WDC is proudly Democratic—and we are also committed democrats. We do not believe that otherwise eligible voters should have to affiliate with a party in order to participate in primary elections. Nor should an unaffiliated voter be forced to affiliate in order to vote or be automatically affiliated with the political party whose ballot the voter voted.

**WDC urges a favorable report on HB4 496 - Election Law - Unaffiliated Voters - Open Primary Elections.**

Cynthia  
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