

HB 219: Maryland Voting Rights Act of 2026 - Voter Intimidation and Suppression:
Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Government, Labor & Elections Committee:

I am writing to **oppose HB 219, the Maryland Voting Rights Act of 2026 – Voter Intimidation and Suppression.**

While election laws should indeed safeguard the right to vote, I am concerned that the broad and vaguely defined prohibitions and enforcement mechanisms in this bill could **undermine election security, create confusion, and open the door to costly litigation that distracts from ensuring fair and secure elections.**

Security and clarity are essential to public confidence in any election system. Protections against genuine voter intimidation and suppression should be carefully targeted, with **clear definitions of prohibited conduct and procedures that do not leave election officials vulnerable to subjective claims or inconsistent enforcement.** The language in **HB 219**, as currently drafted, risks broad interpretations of “intimidation, deception, or obstruction” that could entangle routine election administration practices in litigation rather than strengthen them, because there are no definitions of those terms.

I am also concerned that the bill’s provisions prohibiting any local government action “that results in a disparity between members of a protected class and other members of the electorate” could lead to **uncertain legal standards and unintended challenges to legitimate election practices.** This could burden local election officials, create inconsistent enforcement, and potentially compromise election security by diverting limited resources away from core election integrity functions.

Additionally, expanding private causes of action or broad enforcement remedies without clear boundaries may lead to **an increase in speculative or politically motivated lawsuits that undermine rather than strengthen confidence in our elections.**

Maryland should pursue election security reforms that are **precise, transparent, and uphold both the integrity of our electoral system and voters’ confidence in that system.** Unfortunately, **HB 219** does not do that as currently structured.

For example, I am extremely concerned by the language of this bill. I am concerned about “language assistance”. If there are people voting that do not have a comprehensive enough understanding of the English language (since English is our country’s “official” language), then how are they going to be able to understand what or

whom they are voting for? This situation screams voter intimidation to me, because other people can influence how and for whom people vote, if people do not understand English well enough.

"... DURING THE PERIOD BEGINNING 21 DAYS BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF EARLY VOTING THROUGH ELECTION DAY, THE STATE BOARD, A LOCAL BOARD, OR A MUNICIPAL CORPORATION THAT ADMINISTERS ITS OWN ELECTIONS MAY **CONSIDER A CHANGE IN ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY AFFECTING VOTING RIGHTS** AT A MEETING IF THE STATE BOARD, LOCAL BOARD, OR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION PROVIDES **REASONABLE PUBLIC NOTICE OF THE CHANGE AT LEAST 48 HOURS BEFORE** THE SCHEDULED MEETING TIME..." How does anyone think that 48 hours is enough time to notify the public of a "change in administrative policy affecting voting rights"? We have portions of the public that are elderly that do not have computers or smart phones and do not have access to those technologies. How would these people be contacted, especially within 48 hours?! Just because you have a notice on the State website does not mean that our elderly will be able to access that notice. My father is almost 90 years old. He has never learned how to even turn on a computer and does not own a smart phone. How would you reach him to notify him of any changes to his voting rights?!

The following language of the bill is particularly concerning: "... NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER LAW, IF THE COURT FINDS A VIOLATION OF THIS SUBTITLE, THE COURT SHALL ORDER APPROPRIATE REMEDIES THAT ARE TAILORED TO ADDRESS THE VIOLATION IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ENSURE THAT PROTECTED CLASS VOTERS HAVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, WHICH MAY INCLUDE: (I) **PROVIDING ADDITIONAL TIME TO VOTE DURING AN ELECTION;** (II) **ELIMINATION OF STAGGERED ELECTIONS SO THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY ARE ELECTED AT THE SAME TIME;** (III) **ADDITIONAL VOTING HOURS OR DAYS;** (IV) **ADDITIONAL POLLING LOCATIONS;** (V) **ADDITIONAL MEANS OF VOTING, SUCH AS VOTING BY MAIL OR ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO RETURN BALLOTS;** (VI) **ORDERING OF SPECIAL ELECTIONS;** (VII) **REQUIRING EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ADMISSION OF VOTERS;** (VIII) **REQUIRING ADDITIONAL VOTER EDUCATION;** (IX) **THE RESTORATION OR ADDITION OF PERSONS TO THE STATEWIDE VOTER REGISTRATION LIST...**" Those measures are **extreme** and need to be brought before our legislature for a vote to make sure that these measures are not wholly unfair to the rest of the voting public. "Ordering of special elections"? "Requiring additional voter education"? "Restoration or addition of persons to the statewide voter registration list"? These measures go too far and make our elections ripe for fraud!!

As far as "remedies" are concerned, "... THE COURT SHALL HAVE THE POWER TO REQUIRE A LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT REMEDIES THAT ARE **INCONSISTENT WITH ANY OTHER PROVISION OF STATE OR LOCAL LAW....**" Why would citizens/voters want a court to issue a remedy that is "inconsistent" with any other provision of state or local law? That also sounds like fraud.

"... A LOCAL GOVERNMENT SHALL PROVIDE NOTICE AS DESCRIBED IN THIS SECTION AT LEAST 15 DAYS BEFORE A HEARING TO ADOPT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CHANGES: (I) **A CHANGE TO THE METHOD OF ELECTION FOR A LOCAL GOVERNMENT**; (II) A GOVERNMENTAL REORGANIZATION, INCLUDING ANNEXATION, INCORPORATION, DISSOLUTION, CONSOLIDATION, OR DIVISION OF A LOCAL GOVERNMENT; (III) **A CHANGE TO DISTRICT BOUNDARIES WITHIN A LOCAL GOVERNMENT**; AND (IV) **A CHARTER AMENDMENT AUTHORIZING AN ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY AFFECTING VOTING RIGHTS...**" A 15 day notice for major voting changes, such as method of voting, a change to district boundaries, and a charter amendment authorizing an administrative policy affecting voting rights? This language is outrageous and again appears to leave out our legislature in making such major changes to voting rights!!

And then if a party feels "aggrieved", "... THE PARTY MAY NOT FILE AN ACTION UNDER THIS SUBTITLE **UNTIL 60 DAYS AFTER** SENDING A NOTIFICATION LETTER TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OR ON RECEIPT OF A WRITTEN DENIAL BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER..." Now you want to dictate the exact conditions under which an "aggrieved" party may then file a lawsuit. That is completely unreasonable!! "...A LOCAL GOVERNMENT SHALL RESPOND IN WRITING TO A NOTIFICATION LETTER SUBMITTED UNDER THIS SECTION WITHIN 60 DAYS AFTER RECEIPT OF THE NOTIFICATION LETTER..." You have now dictated that an "aggrieved" party must wait 4 months before filing a lawsuit, 60 days for a notification letter and 60 days for a response. This language is egregious!!

"... IF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADOPTS A RESOLUTION WITHIN 60 DAYS AFTER RECEIVING THE NOTIFICATION LETTER IDENTIFYING A REMEDY, AFFIRMING ITS INTENT TO ENACT AND IMPLEMENT A REMEDY, AND ESTABLISHING A TIMELINE AND SPECIFIC STEPS IT WILL TAKE TO DO SO: 1. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SHALL ENACT AND IMPLEMENT THE REMEDY **WITHIN 150 DAYS** AFTER RECEIPT OF THE NOTIFICATION LETTER; AND 2. **THE PARTY WHO SUBMITTED THE NOTIFICATION LETTER UNDER THIS SECTION MAY NOT FILE AN ACTION AGAINST THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE 150 DAYS ALLOWED UNDER ITEM 1 OF THIS SUBPARAGRAPH.** (5) (I) IF, UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OR ANY CODE HOME RULE OR CHARTER COUNTY ORDINANCE, **THE GOVERNING BODY OF A LOCAL GOVERNMENT LACKS**

AUTHORITY TO ENACT OR IMPLEMENT A REMEDY IDENTIFIED UNDER PARAGRAPH (4)(III) OF THIS SUBSECTION WITHIN 150 DAYS FROM THE SUBMISSION OF THE NOTIFICATION LETTER, OR THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS A COVERED JURISDICTION UNDER A STATE OR FEDERAL PRECLEARANCE PROGRAM, **THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MAY NONETHELESS ENACT AND IMPLEMENT A PROPOSED REMEDY ON APPROVAL BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (II) 35 OF THIS PARAGRAPH..." This language is contemptible!!

"...THE ATTORNEY GENERAL MAY AUTHORIZE THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT OR ENACT A REMEDY **NOTWITHSTANDING THE APPLICABLE LAW OR AUTHORITY TO THE CONTRARY** IF: 1. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL DETERMINES THAT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MAY BE IN VIOLATION OF THIS SUBTITLE; 2. THE PROPOSED REMEDY WOULD ADDRESS A POTENTIAL VIOLATION; 3. THE PROPOSED REMEDY IS **UNLIKELY TO VIOLATE THE U.S. CONSTITUTION OR ANY RELEVANT FEDERAL LAW**; AND 4. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED REMEDY IS FEASIBLE..." "Unlikely to violate the U. S. Constitution or any relevant federal law"?! Unlikely but **not certain**?! This language is scandalous and disgraceful!!

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **oppose HB 219**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals