



Testimony - HB 219, Maryland Voting Rights Act of 2026 - Voter Intimidation and  
Suppression

Favorable

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

February 11, 2026

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Honorable Chairwoman Wells & Members of the House Government, Labor, and  
Elections Committee:

SEIU Local 500 members include school employees, public sector workers, higher education staff, and other workers who keep our communities functioning. Many of our members are voters who have historically faced barriers to full political participation—workers of color, immigrants, language-minority voters, and voters with disabilities. Protecting access to the ballot is not an abstract principle for us; it directly affects whether our members and the communities they serve are heard.

House Bill 219 addresses a growing and urgent problem: the erosion of voting rights through administrative maneuvering, intimidation, deception, and policies that disproportionately burden protected communities. As federal voting rights protections have been weakened, states like Maryland must step up to ensure that access to the ballot is not undermined by silence, confusion, or discriminatory impact.

This bill takes critical steps to protect voters by strengthening transparency and public notice requirements when election policies are changed. Too often, last-minute or poorly publicized changes to polling locations, voter assistance, or election procedures leave working people—especially those juggling multiple jobs, caregiving responsibilities, or language barriers—effectively shut out of the process. Requiring meaningful notice and centralized public access to this information is a commonsense safeguard that promotes trust and participation.

House Bill 219 also draws a clear line against voter intimidation and deception. The right to vote must be free from threats, misinformation, obstruction, and harassment—whether those acts come from private individuals or actors operating under color of law. Explicitly prohibiting these practices and providing real enforcement mechanisms is essential to ensuring that voters can cast their ballots safely and confidently.

Most importantly, the bill prohibits local governments from implementing election policies or practices that result in material disparities in access or participation for protected classes. By focusing on impact rather than requiring proof of discriminatory intent, House Bill 219 reflects the reality that modern voter suppression often hides behind neutral language while producing unequal outcomes. This bill rightly centers equity, fairness, and the lived experience of voters.

SEIU Local 500 strongly supports the enforcement provisions in this bill, including meaningful remedies and the ability for affected voters and organizations to seek relief. Rights without enforcement are hollow, and this legislation ensures that when voting rights are violated, there are real consequences and real solutions.

At its core, House Bill 219 affirms a simple but powerful principle: democracy works best when every eligible voter has an equal opportunity to participate, without fear, confusion, or structural disadvantage. We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 219 and help ensure that Maryland remains a state where voting rights are protected, strengthened, and respected.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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