

In Favor of House Bill 580 – Montgomery County – Voting Methods (MC 1-26)

Dear Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

My name is Liza Smith. I am an elected member of the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee representing District 14, currently on the ballot for reelection, and an active union member. I urge a favorable report on HB 580.

As both a local elected official and a union advocate for working families, I believe strongly that our democracy works best when voters have a meaningful voice and leaders are elected with broad support.

HB 580 is enabling legislation. It simply allows Montgomery County to explore updated voting methods at the local level. It does not mandate any change and would take effect in January 2027.

Since 2014, every Democratic Primary for County Executive has been decided without a majority of the vote. In 2022, four of seven district primary winners also won without majority support. With competitive races anticipated in 2026, split votes and non-majority outcomes are likely to continue.

In the labor movement, legitimacy comes from collective voice and majority support. Our elections should reflect that same principle. Allowing the county to consider reforms such as ranked choice voting creates space for constructive campaigns, strengthens accountability, and ensures elected officials more accurately reflect voter preferences.

The Montgomery County House Delegation voted unanimously in support of HB 580, alongside broad backing from local leaders and community members.

Montgomery County has long led the way on democratic innovation. HB 580 gives our county the opportunity to continue that leadership and strengthen trust in our elections.

I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,
Liza Smith