



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Government, Labor, and Elections Committee - Sponsor Testimony

HB580 Montgomery County - Voting Methods

Delegate Aaron Kaufman

Good morning, Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr and esteemed colleagues. I am Delegate Aaron Kaufman, representing District 18, Montgomery County. I am requesting a favorable report for HB580 Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1–26, Ranked Choice Voting.

The Montgomery County Delegation unanimously passed prior versions of this bill in 2025, 2024, 2022, 2021, and 2019. A few weeks ago, the Montgomery County Council voted to support this bill as well. We ask that the principle of local courtesy be honored.

This legislation would authorize the Montgomery County Council to consider and, if it chooses, adopt ranked choice voting or other alternative voting methods for future local elections. The bill does not mandate or immediately implement any new voting system. Rather, it grants the County Council the authority to evaluate options, determine applicability to specific offices or elections, and establish an implementation framework through local law.

Ranked Choice Voting, or RCV, allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference rather than selecting just one. After all votes are cast, if no candidate has a majority, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Voters who picked the eliminated candidate as their first



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choice then can have their vote counted for their second choice. This process continues until one candidate has a majority of the votes.

Opponents of this bill have raised concerns about this process confusing voters. In a study of RCV in municipal elections, researchers from the University of Sydney found RCV did not negatively affect turnout. RCV doesn't complicate the process for voters; it allows them to better voice their opinion: voters would still be able to select only one candidate if they want to. Additionally, Montgomery County would launch an education campaign to ensure that all constituents are well-informed on how to cast an RCV ballot before arriving at the ballot box.

In November 2024, the District of Columbia voted for Initiative 83 or the Make All Votes Count Act of 2024, “implementing RCV in all presidential, federal, and district elections”¹. In 2025, 52 jurisdictions across 23 states used rank choice voting for either local elections, primaries, or federal general elections. RCV is also used state-wide in Alaska and Maine for federal elections, and many other municipalities across the country. Hawaii used RCV in 2025 for special federal elections and special county elections. We can learn from the examples set by these states and municipalities when implementing RCV in Montgomery County.

Another example that can be studied is New York City's second use of RCV. According

¹ Safeguarding D.C. voters' adoption of ranked choice voting and semi-open primaries (Wilson et al. v. District of Columbia Board of Elections and Rice et al.). Campaign Legal Center. (n.d.). <https://campaignlegal.org/cases-actions/safeguarding-dc-voters-adoption-ranked-choice-voting-and-semi-open-primaries-wilson>



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to a fair vote non-partisan organization that focuses on improving democracy efforts through voting reforms, New York City voting “ran smoothly, voters took advantage of the option to rank candidates, and RCV is quickly becoming a standard aspect of New York City’s elections.”²

The evidence shows that RCV forces candidates to better represent all voters. In Montgomery County, primaries often decide the outcome of elections. Candidates often win in crowded primaries without forming a majority and then go on to win an uncontested general election without ever receiving a true mandate. RCV makes it impossible to be elected without a majority of voters; forcing candidates to build consensus and better reflect the will of the people.

RCV is catching on across the country because it allows people to better voice their opinions.

For these reasons, I ask for a favorable report on HB580 - Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1–26. Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions.

Footnotes

² What we learned from New York City’s second ranked choice voting election - fairvote. (n.d.-c). <https://fairvote.org/report/rcv-in-nyc-report-2023/>

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1. *Safeguarding D.C. voters' adoption of ranked choice voting and semi-open primaries*
(*Wilson et al. v. District of Columbia Board of Elections and Rice et al.*). Campaign Legal Center. (n.d.).
<https://campaignlegal.org/cases-actions/safeguarding-dc-voters-adoption-ranked-choice-voting-and-semi-open-primaries-wilson>
2. Wherever U.S citizens go, Fvap ensures their voice is heard. (n.d.-c).
<https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Outreach-Materials/PrimaryElectionsFactSheet.pdf>
3. *What we learned from New York City's second ranked choice voting election - fairvote.*
(n.d.-c). <https://fairvote.org/report/rcv-in-nyc-report-2023/>