

16 February 2026

Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
145 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB 580 — Montgomery County — Voting Methods (MC 1-26)

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

My name is Elizabeth Hood and I'm a Maryland resident. I'm writing to ask you to support HB 580 (Montgomery County — Voting Methods, MC 1-26) and to indicate my **favorable** support for this bill.

This bill, widely backed by county and city leaders, community organizations, and residents, comes down to a basic principle: the people we elect should have support from a real majority of voters whenever possible, especially in races with several strong candidates. When winners are elected with a small slice of the vote, it leaves many residents feeling unheard and as if their vote was “wasted”; conversely, with ranked choice voting, there's no penalty for voting for the candidate in whom you believe, even if that candidate is not the most likely to win.

Many places have used reforms like ranked choice voting to better capture voter preferences and help ensure winners have broader support. Over 65 jurisdictions in the U.S. use ranked choice voting, including Tacoma Park, Maryland.

Evidence from elsewhere also generally shows that ranked choice voting is not prohibitively complicated. In U.S. jurisdictions that have used ranked choice voting, available results and voter feedback show no sign of reduced participation or widespread ballot errors. For example, in Alaska's 2022 congressional special election, 73% of voters ranked more than one candidate, and post-election polling found 85% said ranked choice voting was simple; additionally, in Alaska's 2022 statewide ranked-choice races, over 99.8% of voters cast a valid ballot. In Maine, turnout was higher in both the first midterm and first presidential cycle after adopting ranked-choice voting compared with prior comparable elections (2018: 59.9% vs. 2014: 58.7%; 2020: 75.8% vs. 2016: 72.9%) (RankedVote n.d.).

In Maryland, HB 580 doesn't force any immediate change; instead, it's enabling legislation that gives Montgomery County the ability to study and adopt a voting method locally that better reflects voter preferences and produces stronger, more majority-backed outcomes. It does not mandate a new voting method and because it wouldn't take effect until January 2027, it won't affect current elections and instead allows time for public input and planning. Further, the

Montgomery County House Delegation has already voted unanimously in favor of HB 580 / MC 1-26, indicating local support.

I support Montgomery County having the option to explore approaches like this through a transparent local process. When winners are elected without majority support, it can feel like the community didn't truly choose and I want a process that better reflects voter preferences in my community.

Montgomery County has often led on common-sense improvements such as this. Please give the County the flexibility to strengthen elections in a way that fits our community and supports majority-backed outcomes.

Thank you for your time. I respectfully urge you to support HB 580 and issue a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Hood
718 Longview Avenue
Westminster MD 21157
elizabethhood837@gmail.com
(301) 385-4420

“Pros and Cons of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV).” *RankedVote*, n.d.,
<https://www.rankedvote.co/guides/understanding-ranked-choice-voting/pros-and-cons-of-rcv>.
Accessed 15 Feb. 2026.