

Testimony in Opposition to HB 580 – Montgomery County Voting Methods (MC 1-16)

I respectfully urge the committee to **oppose HB 580** for the following reasons:

- **Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) makes voting more complicated and discourages participation.** Voter drop-off already occurs in down-ballot races. Adding a longer, more confusing process will further discourage voter participation and increase waiting times at polling places. Many voters do not understand RCV, and few legislators can clearly explain it.
- **RCV disenfranchises voters whose candidates are eliminated early.** In races with many candidates, votes cast for those receiving the fewest votes are discarded and not counted in later rounds, effectively nullifying those voters' participation.
- **RCV forces voters to guess.** Voters are asked to rank multiple candidates without knowing who the top contenders will be in subsequent rounds, requiring speculative voting rather than informed choice.
- **RCV treats voters unequally.** If no candidate receives 50% in the first round, the lowest vote-getter is eliminated, and second-choice votes are redistributed. Voters who supported the leading candidate in the first round do not get an additional vote in later rounds, while others do.
- **RCV can result in a less favored candidate winning.** Voters whose first-choice candidates are eliminated effectively receive additional influence through second-choice votes, potentially allowing a candidate who was not the first-round leader to win.
- **RCV is not a true runoff election.** Proponents often refer to it as an “instant runoff,” but it is better described as a “blind runoff,” because voters make multiple selections without knowing how each round will unfold. If a runoff is desired, it should be a traditional runoff election where all voters are treated equally and vote with full knowledge of the remaining candidates.
- **Approval Voting undermines meaningful choice.** Allowing voters to select as many candidates as they wish for a single office dilutes voter intent and does not reflect a clear preference.

- **RCV complicates vote counting and certification.** The process relies on complex algorithms and multiple rounds of calculation, delaying results and reducing transparency. I do not trust opaque machine algorithms. Simple vote counting is easier to understand and inspires greater public confidence.

For these reasons, I respectfully request an **Unfavorable Report on HB 580** and urge the committee to preserve clear, fair, and transparent voting methods for Montgomery County voters.

Respectfully submitted,

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