

February 16, 2026

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

**Re: House Bill 580 - Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26**  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Government, Labor, and Elections Committee Members:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge your support for **HB 580**, *Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26*. We believe the time is right to advance this enabling legislation for Montgomery County voters.

Montgomery County has embraced innovation and led the way on democracy reforms across the state. The County was the first jurisdiction to adopt public financing. The City of Rockville led the state in the use of all vote-by-mail elections. Takoma Park has demonstrated for nearly 20 years how ranked choice voting empowers voters and elect candidates.

Over the last 10 years, Montgomery County has passed term limits for elected office, implemented public financing, and expanded the number of seats on the County Council. Yet, the County has not been able to adjust its voting methods to adapt for these changes.

- Every Democratic Primary County Executive race has been won with less than a majority of the vote since 2014.
- In the 2022 Democratic Primary, four out of the seven winners in district council races won with less than a majority of the vote.
- In 2026, several county races are very competitive and may result in non-majority winners and split votes.

**This is not about the winners but the way we vote.** All of these contests feature more than two candidates – often more than five. The lack of majority winners in these races (and others) is because voters are limited in a fundamental way – how they express their choices for elected office.

Montgomery County is seeking to explore voting methods that can better address the challenges voters have faced repeatedly.

It is important to emphasize that HB 580 is enabling legislation and will not mandate the use of any voting method. It does give the Montgomery County Board of Elections and County Council the opportunity to determine how best to implement a new voting method and when it will go into effect.

Passage of this legislation will allow Montgomery County to leverage its people, systems, and expertise to ensure effective implementation and robust voter education. Here are three key reasons Montgomery Council is uniquely positioned to lead on this issue:

#### **1. Local Experts & Ready Equipment**

Montgomery County is fortunate to have local election administration experts on ranked choice voting in the City of Takoma Park. In addition, state voting equipment is RCV-capable. Maryland uses

Election Systems & Software (ES&S) voting equipment and ranked ballots can be tabulated either by updating ES&S software or using federally-tested election supporting technology.

## **2. Access to Best Practices for Ballot Design, Implementation, and Administration**

Ranked choice voting is used in over 50 jurisdictions across the United States. Montgomery County can utilize the expertise of election administrators in RCV-jurisdictions along with independent organizations, like the Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center (RCVRC), that have developed guides, tabulation tools, and support for jurisdictions, most recently in New York City. Improved ballot design and best practices are available through the RCVRC, which has conducted independent usability tests.

## **3. Robust Voter Education**

In any election, voter education is essential. We support the needs of the local Board of Election to develop training for election judges. In addition, robust voter education and outreach must be available to voters and candidates. The Ranked Choice Voting coalition includes the League of Women Voters, which has stated publicly its intention to support and engage in voter education.

In 2014, the Montgomery County Right to Vote Task Force recommended the County Council include ranked choice voting as a key change to local elections. Enabling legislation has been introduced since 2019 with unanimous support from the Montgomery County Delegation and the Montgomery County Council. Montgomery County has an opportunity to be an innovative leader in the state and provide additional insights in the region as more jurisdictions adopt and use ranked choice voting.

**We urge the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee to give HB 580 full consideration and a favorable report.**

Respectfully submitted,

### **Organizations**

All Votes Count Maryland  
CAIR Maryland  
Common Cause Maryland  
FairVote Action  
Green Party of Montgomery County  
Indivisible Howard County  
League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, MD  
Maryland Forward Party  
Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club  
National Council of Jewish Women, Maryland  
Ranked Choice Voting Maryland  
Rank the Vote Action  
RepresentWomen  
Veterans for Maryland Voters