

February 16, 2026

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

House Bill 580 - Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26 - FAV

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

I urge your support for **HB 580**, *Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26*. I believe the time is right to allow Montgomery County to move forward with using new voting methods. Give county residents and leaders the power to choose what works best for them.

Importantly, let me note that HB 580 does not mandate anything; it simply allows the county to improve its voting methods and remedy recurring issues with recent county elections. My reasons for urging you to support HB 580 are as follows.

HB 580 authorizes voting methods with widely recognized benefits

- The new voting methods allow voters to express their preferences more fully and with more nuance.
- The new voting methods prevent the “spoiler effect” that currently can result both in wasted votes and in election outcomes not representing the broad preferences of the community.
- By avoiding worries about the spoiler effect and by allowing a more complete expression of voter preferences, the new voting methods encourage more widely representative sets of candidates and office holders.

HB 580 remedies recurring issues with recent county elections

- Since 2014, every Democratic Primary County Executive race has been won with less than a majority of the vote.
- In 2022, 4 out of 7 Primary winners in district races won with less than a majority.

HB 580 has strong support in the county

- The Montgomery County House Delegation voted unanimously in favor of HB 580 / MC 1-26.
- The bill is supported widely by county leaders, city leaders, community organizations, and residents.

HB 580 does not jeopardize the success of county elections

- The voting methods authorized in HB 580 have been used successfully in dozens of jurisdictions (from state to local levels) in the US and other countries, including Takoma Park, MD.
- Recently, voters in DC and Greenbelt, MD overwhelmingly voted for the adoption of ranked choice voting (a method HB 580 would authorize)—providing a strong indication that voters in the region feel up to the task of using a new voting method.
- The voting methods HB 580 would authorize are transparent, trustworthy, and simple for voters—not more complicated than, for example, voting in shows such as “Dancing With The Stars”.

HB 580 allows thorough preparations for smooth implementation

- HB 580 would go into effect only in January 2027 and would not impact the upcoming elections.
- HB 580 does not set a timetable and allows Montgomery County to proceed at a suitable pace without hastening the implementation of new voting methods.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee to give HB 580 full consideration and a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Tamas Varnai
Silver Spring, MD, 20910