

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 Government, Labor, and Elections Committee Members,

I am writing to urge you to support HB 580, which would permit Montgomery County to transition their elections to ranked-choice voting (RCV), a system that is widely recognized by both academics who study voting systems and by voters who use RCV to better represent voter preferences. I am hopeful that our state legislature will demonstrate its commitment to democracy by allowing Montgomery County, and any other County that expresses a desire to do so, to switch to RCV. I am hopeful that my own county, Prince George's, will be next!

For a vibrant democracy, we need to decrease barriers to running for office by truly welcoming all candidates without concern about spoiler candidates. We need to ensure that every vote contributes to the outcome rather than throwing away the votes of voters whose first choice doesn't win. We need a process that identifies winners with the greatest overall support. The current system in place in Montgomery County, as in other counties in our state, does not meet this standard. Ranked Choice Voting does.

In recent Montgomery County elections, it is common for races to be won without a majority. This is problematic. Our goal should be to identify winners with the broadest support, even in crowded fields. Because of its many benefits, ranked choice voting is becoming adopted in many jurisdictions nationwide in the interest of promoting more representative government.

I fully support Montgomery County in their effort to improve their election process. HB 580 would not *mandate* ranked-choice voting, it would simply make it possible to use this form of voting in Montgomery County. It is difficult for me to imagine why the state legislature would want to block a jurisdiction from choosing to switch to a voting system with all the democracy-promoting advantages of RCV. Having more tools in our election toolbox to identify broad support candidates is a win for the County and a win for Maryland. I am excited to see the option of ranked-choice voting on the table as the county considers ways to strengthen their elections.

Please vote to give Montgomery County the ability to strengthen their election process by supporting HB 580.

Sincerely,

Leo Shapiro
6907 Rhode Island Ave
College Park, MD 20740