



TESTIMONY FOR HB0219

Maryland Voting Rights Act of 2026 - Voter Intimidation and Suppression

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Smith

Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0219 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

This bill, if enacted, would codify many of the principles that we, as Marylanders, hold dear in relation to elections. It requires that any material changes to the administrative policy regarding elections must be preceded by advance, public notice to allow for input from voters. It also requires that any statutes, rules and regulations or other legal requirements related to the right to vote shall be construed liberally in favor of:

- protecting the right to cast a ballot
- ensuring that eligible voters are not impaired in registering to vote or voting, including having their votes counted
- ensuring that protected class voters have equitable access to opportunities to register to vote and to vote.

It prohibits voter intimidation of any kind and makes the person who tries to intimidate other voters or someone who aids in voter intimidation to be liable for any damages awarded by a court including nominal damages for any violation and compensatory or punitive damages for any willful violation. Finally, it creates a framework for ensuring that members of protective classes are not disenfranchised by administrative voting policies made at either the local level or the state level.

These are all policy goals that we believe embody the kind of beliefs that we all have.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.