



MARYLAND FORWARD PARTY

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BILL NO: HB1289

TITLE: Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked–Choice Voting

COMMITTEE: Government, Labor and Elections

POSITION: FAVORABLE

DATE: February 23, 2026

TO: Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee

FROM: Maryland Forward Party

SUBJECT: Study In Theory And In Practice

Maryland Forward Party **supports HB1289** as studies on alternative voting methods encourage a vibrant democratic process. In complement to HB1289’s proposed Task Force, through HB0580, this Committee has the opportunity to authorize actual employment of ranked-choice voting (RCV) and approval voting, enabling legislation in one of Maryland’s largest communities, Montgomery County.

Maryland Forward Party urges the Committee to **issue a favorable report for both HB0580 and HB1289**, advancing both, because:

- **Proven Benefits:** Studies clearly show RCV “is an improvement over plurality voting with clear benefits in terms of representation, campaign quality, mobilization, and turnout [and] that RCV encourages greater consensus building as well as more civil political campaigns.”¹
- **Seamless Rollout:** A Task Force studying the impact of RCV or approval voting statewide would provide for a seamless rollout of any future adoption. We encourage the thoughtful implementation of new voting procedures to mitigate against any unexpected fiscal costs or voter confusion, and we thank Delegate Terrasa for introducing this Task Force.
- **Aligned Goals:** Montgomery County’s requests, as reflected in HB0580, are perfectly aligned with the goal of HB1289 and the proposed Task Force, which is to “review how approval voting and ranked–choice voting are used in other states and local jurisdictions in the United States.” Permitting Montgomery County to move forward directly supports this objective and provides an opportunity for the Task Force to study an active rollout in one of Maryland’s largest jurisdictions.
- **Actionable Local Data:** Given the opportunity, Montgomery County’s consideration and potential implementation of RCV or approval voting would provide the Task Force with

¹ Eveline Dowling and Caroline Tolbert, American Bar Association, *What We Know About Ranked Choice Voting, Updated for 2025*, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/election_law/american-democracy/our-work/what-we-know-about-ranked-choice-voting-2025/.



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concrete data on the implementation of alternative voting methods locally. In addition to the data available from jurisdictions already employing or considering employment of RCV in Maryland (e.g., Takoma Park and Greenbelt), implementation in Montgomery County—which is ready, willing, and able—would provide the Task Force with invaluable, real-world feedback from Marylanders actually implementing these increasingly common voting methods.

Maryland Forward Party believes that studying and piloting alternative voting methods is the most pragmatic path to a modern electoral system. Together, HB0580 and HB1289 would result in significant, actionable data for the state of Maryland regarding future voting reforms. We encourage the Committee to honor Montgomery County’s repeated requests to conduct its own review, and we respectfully **urge a FAVORABLE report on both HB1289 and HB0580.**

Sincerely,
Lee Bradshaw
Legislative Committee Chair
Maryland Forward Party

