



**Maryland House of Delegates
Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
February 11, 2026
Submitted February 9, 2026
HB 219 (FAV)**


Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 219, which enacts protections against voter suppression and voter intimidation, deception, and obstruction as part of the Maryland Voting Rights Act of 2026. Fair Elections Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers to registration and voting through advocacy and impact litigation.

Although Maryland law features important pro-voter policies, it contains no protection against voter suppression. Voter suppression is the use of standards, policies, and practices that deny or abridge the right to vote, such as disproportionately closing polling places in communities of color. While Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 was designed to combat voter suppression, its protections have been weakened in recent years by the federal courts. Section 11(b) of the federal VRA has been used to combat voter intimidation but has yet to extend to voter deception. Meanwhile, the federal government is not only failing to protect against intimidation and discrimination in our voting processes, but is actively advancing anti-voter policies. In HB 219, Maryland has the opportunity to build on the protections provided in the federal VRA by codifying a clear prohibition against any conduct that interferes with the right to vote through intimidation, fraud, or obstruction, ensuring voters are protected at every stage of our electoral process.

Though Maryland law does have a criminal prohibition against voter intimidation, enforcement depends on the resources of the Maryland Attorney General. With instances of intimidation increasing since 2020, HB 219 creates a streamlined process for handling these issues by allowing voters subject to intimidation to bring their own cases and seek practical relief. Additionally, HB 219's civil protection against voter intimidation includes instances of deception and obstruction. Voter deception is the use of false or misleading messages or schemes in order to interfere with voting; and voter obstruction is the blocking, delaying, or otherwise interfering with voters' access to polling places, ballot drop boxes, or the voting process itself.

Protections against voter suppression and intimidation, as part of the Maryland Voting Rights Act, will help create a more inclusive and accountable democracy and ensure no eligible Marylander is left behind at the ballot box. Fair Elections Center urges swift passage of this bill. If you would like further information, please feel free to contact Emily Davis, Counsel at Fair Elections Center, at edavis@fairelectionscenter.org.

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