



SIERRA CLUB

MARYLAND CHAPTER

P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections
Testimony on: HB 219 Maryland Voting Rights Act of 2026 – Voter Intimidation and Suppression
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 11, 2026

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on HB 219. The bill will add protection in Maryland law to prevent intimidation that interferes with an individual's right to vote. The bill also has provisions to prevent suppression of the votes of citizens who are in racial, color, or language minority groups.

HB 219 creates a civil private right of action against voter intimidation to ensure that all Marylanders can participate in the political process free from harassment, intimidation, or threats of violence. While criminal prohibitions exist, civil protections are not currently available under Maryland law. By supplementing existing criminal prohibitions, the bill gives impacted voters the right to sue a person or group engaging in these acts. Protections like these are needed by Maryland voters who continue to face serious challenges, such as those at polling locations in [Montgomery County](#) in 2020 and [Frederick County](#) in 2024.

The federal Voting Rights Act, passed in 1965, included important provisions to protect the votes of citizens who are in racial, color, or language minority groups. Unfortunately, some of those provisions have been significantly weakened by Supreme Court decisions in recent years. The current national administration is reducing enforcement, and the Congress is considering legislation that will undermine the progress made under the 1965 Act.

HB 219 will protect against barriers that deny voting opportunities in a way that is efficient and cost-effective for both voters and local governments. It builds upon the federal Voting Rights Act by providing a clear and efficient framework for eliminating discriminatory barriers to the ballot, known as vote suppression. Voters or the Maryland Attorney General will be able to hold jurisdictions accountable for continuing practices, such as inaccessible polling locations or inadequate voting hours, that suppress turnout in historically disenfranchised communities.

The Sierra Club and its members care about both the natural and human environments, including ending racial and social injustice. As a grassroots environmental advocacy group, the Sierra Club firmly believes that all eligible voters should have an equal opportunity to participate effectively, without being subjected to procedures or systems that intimidate them or suppress their votes.

For those reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 219.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.