



## **TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT, LABOR, ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

### **HB 219 Maryland Voting Rights Act of 2026 - Voter Intimidation and Suppression**

#### **POSITION – Support**

**BY: Linda T. Kohn, President**

**Date: February 11, 2026**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes that voters should be able to participate in the democratic process without discrimination, harassment, intimidation, obstruction, or deception.

With the growing unrest around politics, elections and voting have become a lightning rod of doubt and distrust. Harassment and intimidation of voters and election officials are an increasing threat. This has led to organized efforts to deceive voters with mis- and dis-information and cast doubt on our election methods, particularly those methods that we see being utilized more frequently in communities of color. This can include targeted efforts to misrepresent the day of an election and, as seen in some states, to go as far as setting up fake ballot drop boxes. Sadly, Maryland voters have even seen attempted efforts to stop people from voting.

HB 219 provides robust civil protections against voter intimidation, deception, and obstruction to complement existing criminal prohibitions. Critically, this includes empowering voters or election officials to protect themselves against threats and abuse. This provision builds upon Section 11(b) of the federal Voting Rights Act but is more expansive in two key ways. It directly addresses the increasing problem of voter deception. It also allows voters to receive financial compensation from those who harm them. More than nine-in-ten (91%) Maryland voters [support](#) protections against harassment and intimidation.

In 2024, LWVMD as well several partners, made a concerted effort to dissuade the Charles County Board from using a problematic location and the State Board of Elections from approving that location for an early voting site. Both agencies ignored these requests from state groups and impacted communities. As anticipated, voters were locked out and told they were not allowed to vote. While the problem was resolved it was hours of voters standing outside knowing that their vote was being obstructed.



While Maryland has been and continues to be a leader in voting rights and protections, it cannot protect against the onslaught of attacks seen at the federal level. Now is the time to act and set up these safeguards.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 219.