

SB 800/HB 1289: Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Government, Labor & Elections Committee & Education, Energy & the Environment Committee:

I am writing to express my strong **opposition** to Senate Bill 800 and its cross-filed House Bill 1289, "Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting."

While studying election reforms can have value, creating a formal task force to explore approval voting and ranked-choice voting (RCV) sends the wrong signal and risks paving the way for changes that **could complicate Maryland's elections, confuse voters, and undermine confidence in our democratic process.**

Key concerns include:

- **Complexity and voter confusion:** Ranked-choice voting requires voters to rank candidates (sometimes many), leading to "exhausted" ballots where preferences run out, potentially disenfranchising voters who don't fully understand the system. Approval voting allows voting for multiple candidates but can produce winners without majority support in traditional terms and may encourage strategic voting or bullet voting.
- **Implementation challenges and costs:** Changing ballot designs, voting machines, tabulation software, voter education, and recount procedures statewide or locally would be expensive and logistically difficult, especially for smaller jurisdictions. **Past pilots elsewhere have shown high error rates, longer counting times, and disputes over results.**
- **Risk to election integrity and transparency:** These systems are harder for average citizens to audit or understand compared to simple plurality voting. They **can lead to outcomes perceived as unfair (e.g., a candidate wins without a plurality of first-choice votes), eroding trust in elections** at a time when public confidence is already fragile.
- **Unnecessary distraction:** Maryland's current system is straightforward, familiar, and effective. **Resources should focus on securing existing processes—such as voter ID consistency, ballot access fairness, and cybersecurity—**rather than experimenting with unproven alternatives that could fragment support or favor certain political strategies.

A task force dedicated to these methods implies endorsement of pursuing them, potentially leading to future legislation that imposes them on unwilling voters or jurisdictions. **Maryland should prioritize simplicity, verifiability, and broad**

accessibility in elections over adopting complex systems that have mixed results in other places.

I urge the Committee to **give SB 800/HB 1289 an unfavorable report** and prevent its passage.

Our elections work best when they are easy to understand, transparent, and trusted by all Marylanders—goals better served by strengthening our current framework than by studying radical overhauls.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals