

February 16, 2026

Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
145 Lol House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 580 - Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26 - FAV

Dear Government, Labor, and Elections Committee Members:

I am writing as a citizen of Montgomery County and I urge your support for **HB 580**, *Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26*. I believe the time is right to allow Montgomery County to move forward with new voting methods. This bill will give county residents and leaders the power to choose what works best for them.

HB 580 is an enabling bill. It allows the county to take the next steps at the local level to explore a voting method that addresses issues that have happened repeatedly in county elections over the last decade.

Why HB 580 Matters

- Since 2014, every Democratic Primary County Executive race has been won with less than a majority of the vote.
- In 2022, 4 out of 7 Primary winners in district races won with less than a majority of votes.

There may be split votes and non-majority winners in the upcoming 2026 primaries because of competitive races for county council and county executive. Voters want to turn down the temperature on negative politics and empower voters to have a stronger voice to elect and hold leaders accountable.

Give Montgomery County the ability to choose the best solution for their community.

There is Strong Support

- The Montgomery County House Delegation voted unanimously in favor of HB 580 / MC 1-26.
- The bill is supported widely by county leaders, city leaders, community organizations, and residents.

No Impact on This Year's Elections

- HB 580 is enabling legislation. It does not mandate the use of a new voting method.
- HB 580 would go into effect in January 2027.

The benefits of ranked choice voting are proven and clear at the local and state level. I support ranked choice voting for Montgomery County and the state. I hope there can be a productive discussion at the local level to move the best reform forward for the county. The many positives brought by a voting reform, such as ranked choice voting, include 1) multiple candidates find common ground on the most important issues, 2) these candidates appeal to a broader electorate, bringing out more voters, 3) there is less negative campaigning since candidates do not want to

alienate potential supporters, even if they are not the voters' first choice, 4) this system levels the playing field for candidates, especially women. Other jurisdictions, such as New York City, have seen a significant increase in women candidates since implementing ranked choice voting in the city council elections.

I urge the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee to give HB 580 full consideration and a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Heather Reichardt, MRICS, CMI
Darnestown, Montgomery County, Maryland