

Dear Members of the Government, Labor and Elections Committee,

I am Linda Girdner and I live in Gambrills, MD. I urge you to prioritize and pass **S.B. 255 VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 2026**, a key piece of the Maryland Voting Rights Act (MDVRA). In the last year, we have seen unprecedented and grave threats to voting rights and democracy nationally. In 2026 and beyond, the best way we can fight back against these attacks is to enact the MDVRA.

As currently proposed, the MDVRA makes Maryland's democracy more inclusive by:

- Enshrining robust protections against discriminatory vote dilution and voter suppression into state law;
- Creating strong protections against voter intimidation, deception, and obstruction; and
- Expanding language assistance in elections for voters with limited English proficiency.

Recent polling shows that the MDVRA and each of its provisions are extremely popular among Maryland voters across race and party lines. Notably, 81% of Maryland voters [support an MDVRA](#), and 80% would like their state representative to prioritize its passage. This overwhelming support shows that creating a fair, inclusive democracy is a core Maryland value—and that the MDVRA is both good policy and the will of the people.

Across the country, we are witnessing an alarming rollback of core democratic protections. The federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA)—once the nation's strongest safeguard against racial discrimination in voting—has been severely weakened by decades of damaging court decisions. The U.S. Supreme Court's rulings in *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) and *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee* (2021) have stripped away essential federal oversight and made it extremely difficult for voters to challenge discriminatory practices. Moreover, the Supreme Court is now considering two major cases that could severely limit what's left of the federal VRA. Together, these cases could strip away our last effective tools for fighting racial discrimination in voting.

Recent vote dilution challenges brought against Baltimore County and Federalsburg underscore persistent barriers to the ballot box, such as unfair districts or at-large systems that weaken Black voters' electoral power. Although the challenges were successful in those cases, victories came only after costly, protracted legal battles that the MDVRA would help prevent. And if the Supreme Court sides with opponents of the federal VRA, such victories will be totally out of reach in Maryland without the MDVRA.

Now is Maryland's time to lead. We encourage you to prioritize, pass, and fully fund **S.B. 255 VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF** and we stand ready to work with you to secure this victory for all Maryland voters.

Thank you for your consideration.

Linda Girdner,

Member, Showing Up for Racial Justice, Annapolis and Anne Arundel County