

February 16, 2026

Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
145 Lowe 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 urge your support for **HB 580**, *Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26*. We believe the time is right to allow Montgomery County to move forward with using new voting methods. 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.

We may see 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.

We Have 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 Current 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 and I hope we can have productive discussion at the local level to move the best reform forward for the county. Rank Choice Voting gives voters the opportunity to express their wishes without having concerns about 'wasted' votes and 'spoiler' candidates. Voters are not required to think strategically and can concentrate on determining the extent to which the different candidates reflect their views, wishes, and interests. It also obviates the cost and effort of conducting runoff elections, as any such runoff is essentially built into the process. Candidates must focus on appealing to a broad range of voters, rather than relying on gaining a plurality through having their opponents having the remaining votes split between them.

Montgomery County has embraced innovation and led the way on other democracy reforms. Let's give Montgomery County the power to strengthen their elections!

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

Sincerely,

Keith Rust
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