

Testimony of Michael DeLong in Support of HB 580 to the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee –Voting Methods MC 1-16

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My name is Michael DeLong and I urge the Committee to support [HB 580](#)–Montgomery County Voting Methods 1-16. The time is right to allow Montgomery County to move forward with new voting methods, including ranked choice voting. The county’s residents and leaders should have the power to choose the voting system that best works for them.

I am a resident of Silver Spring and have been involved in local organizing and advocacy for the past ten years. During my time working and volunteering for elected officials, I gained knowledge about various voting methods and their impacts. Over time, I became a supporter of ranked choice voting (RCV), which allows voters to rank candidates in their order of preference.

This voting method is quite straightforward: a voter ranks their candidate according to their preference: first, second, third, and so on. If their first choice does not have a chance to win, the voter’s ballot counts for their next choice. With RCV, voters don’t need to worry about wasted voters or spoiler candidates, or feel forced to vote for the lesser of two evils. And RCV results in election outcomes that better represent voter preferences—candidates who are elected with this method have much broader support and are more in touch with their electorates.

HB 580 is an enabling bill that allows Montgomery County to explore Ranked Choice Voting, in order to address issues that have repeatedly happened in county elections over the last ten years. The first election I was involved in was the 2018 primary election, where we had over 30 candidates running for four County Council seats! There were so many candidates that debates and polling places were overwhelmed, and people almost had to run a gauntlet when coming to vote. Since 1024, every Democratic primary County Executive race has been won with less than a majority of the vote, and in 2022, four out of seven primary winners in district races won with less than a majority.

Montgomery County residents should have the ability to choose the best voting system for their community. Ranked Choice Voting works and already exists in many areas. Right now, 35 American cities and 3 counties use it in public elections or have passed it, plus Maine and Alaska use Ranked Choice Voting statewide without any problems.

Furthermore, this bill has widespread support. The Montgomery County House Delegation voted unanimously in favor of HB 580 and it is widely supported by county and city leaders, community organizations, and residents. As mentioned, HB 580 is an enabling bill, meaning it doesn't mandate the use of Ranked Choice Voting but just allows it, and if passed it would take effect in January 2027.

The benefits of Ranked Choice Voting are proven and clear at the local and state level. I urge the Committee to stand up for democracy and give Montgomery County the power to improve its local elections. I therefore urge a favorable report on HB 580.

Please contact me at michaeldelong94@gmail.com with any questions. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Michael DeLong