

Testimony from:
Deb Otis

In SUPPORT of HB 0350
February 11, 2026
Maryland House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express FairVote Action's support for HB 0350, the Maryland Voting Rights Act (VRA). FairVote Action is a national nonpartisan organization that researches and advocates for reforms that improve our elections.

This landmark legislation would address discrimination against voters of color in Maryland and position Maryland as a national leader on protecting the right to vote.

With a U.S. Supreme Court that seems intent on eliminating many federal voting rights protections, the passage of state-level Voting Rights Acts is the most effective tool to protect and promote the franchise of all Americans. Since California passed the first state Voting Rights Act in 2001, New York, Connecticut, Washington, Virginia, Oregon, Colorado, and Minnesota have passed their own state VRA legislation too.

In every state, discriminatory barriers to equal participation still exist for voters of color, particularly at the local level. The Maryland VRA would go above and beyond the protections provided by federal law and ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to participate in the political process.

The Maryland VRA builds on the most impactful provisions of other states' Voting Rights Acts, and creates some of the strongest voting rights protections in the country by prohibiting vote dilution with streamlined standards and procedures designed to protect the freedom to vote and make litigation less time-intensive and costly than under the federal VRA. Recent litigation in Federalsburg and Baltimore County underscore the crucial need for these protections in our state.

FairVote Action is available to answer any other questions from the committee or provide additional data. You can reach me at dotis@fairvoteaction.org and my FairVote Action colleagues at info@fairvoteaction.org.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Director of Policy and Research at FairVote Action