

HB 0219 - Maryland Voting Rights Act of 2026 - Voter Intimidation and Suppression

Position - Favorable

February 9, 2026

To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

My name is Lesley Frost and I am the Chair of National Council of Jewish Women, Maryland State Policy Advocacy Committee (NCJW MD SPA). I am writing, on behalf of our 600 advocates across the state, to express strong support for HB 0219, Maryland Voting Rights Acts - Voter Intimidation and Suppression.

Maryland has a progressive reputation nationally, yet voting rights abuses and discriminatory election methods persist within our local government entities and there is no prohibition against suppressive election policies and practices in Maryland law. Maryland has the second-highest share of eligible Black voters in the country, but the racial turnout gap between Black and white Maryland voters nearly doubled between 2020 and 2022 and increased again in the 2024 general election. HB 0219 codifies a clear prohibition against voter suppression, meaning policies and practices that burden access to voting, particularly for voters from historically disenfranchised communities and will help reduce the discrepancy in voter turnout that currently exists.

HB 219 also creates a civil protection against voter intimidation that is expansive enough to prohibit deception and obstruction. Intimidation aims at interfering, preventing, or influencing an individual's ability to engage with our elections; deception uses misleading messages or schemes to interfere with voting; and obstruction is blocking, delaying or interfering with access to polling places, ballot drop boxes, or the voting process itself. It is important that Marylanders have protections against ALL three.

By strengthening Maryland's democratic institutions, honoring the legacy of the federal Voting Rights Act, and ensuring that voters are equipped with tools to fight voter intimidation and suppressive election practices, HB 0219 exemplifies NCJW's commitment to follow the Torah's commandment to pursue justice, protect the marginalized, and ensure equality. We respectfully we request a favorable report on HB 219.

Sincerely,
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