



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections
Testimony on: HB 580 Montgomery County – Voting Methods MC 1-26
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 18, 2026

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on HB 580. The bill will authorize the Montgomery County Council to adopt, by law, a ranked choice voting method or an approval voting method for elections to certain local offices.

Research has shown that ranked choice voting, when compared to single-round plurality methods, can result in more candidacies and winning candidates who are women and particularly women of color, at least partly because multiple candidates can run appealing to the same constituency without necessarily splitting the vote.¹ Research also supports the premise that campaigns tend to be more civil and less negative when ranked choice voting is in use.² A candidate would be less likely to criticize opponents harshly when they want to be the second or third choice of their opponents' supporters.

This bill will authorize the Montgomery County Council to decide whether it wants to adopt a voting method for certain local offices that could result in increased diversity and more civil campaigns. If the bill is enacted, the Montgomery County Council would have local control to decide the method of voting for certain local offices and all the related procedural details.

The Sierra Club and its members advocate on behalf of both the natural and human environments, including ending racial and social injustice. We believe the current single-round, winner-take-all voting method has problems, such as allowing a candidate to win a multi-candidate race with a plurality that is far short of a majority. We support alternative electoral methods that better reflect the diversity of public opinion.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 580.

Rich Norling
Chair, Voting Rights Committee
Rich.Norling@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

¹ Sarah John et al., "[The alternative vote: Do changes in single-member voting systems affect descriptive representation of women and minorities?](#)", Electoral Studies, Vol. 54, August 2018, 90-102. The results of this peer-reviewed study are also described in "[The Impact of Ranked Choice Voting on Representation: How Ranked Choice Voting Affects Women and People of Color Candidates in California](#)", published by Representation2020.

² Todd Donovan et al., "[Campaign civility under preferential and plurality voting](#)", Electoral Studies, Vol. 42, June 2016, 157-163.