



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
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Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Chairman
and Members of the Ways and Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis, Maryland

RE: **HB 362** – Montgomery County Voting Methods - Ranked Choice Voting - Approval Voting – **OPPOSED**

Dear Chairman Atterbeary and Committee Members,

The Maryland Federation of Republican Women strongly opposes HB 362 because Ranked Choice Voting is confusing and manipulative. This legislation could set a statewide precedent for changing the method of election, not just for local offices but all elected offices. Approval Voting degrades the sacred duty of voting for our elected officials to a popularity contest.

HB 362 grants the County Council a blank slate to set the process and rules for electing all judicial as well as legislative offices in the County. It authorizes the County Council to adopt a local law that provides the ballot format, procedures for tabulating votes, and any other provision necessary to implement Ranked Choice Voting or Approval Voting. “Any other provision necessary” is very broad and raises the question of whether the County Council could authorize non-citizens to vote in these elections. The city of Takoma Park already allows non-citizens to vote in their municipal elections.

Ranked Choice Voting will introduce a complex system of voting that will be difficult for voters to understand. It will require an extensive and costly education program for voters to learn about the process. While the Fiscal Note for HB 362 is not yet available, the Fiscal Note from a similar bill in 2019 estimated a cost of \$1 million to implement Ranked Choice Voting in Montgomery County alone.

The more candidates and positions involved, the more cumbersome and tedious it will be to make 3 choices for each position. It will increase the time it takes to vote. At the polls, some voters are likely to walk away if the line is too long or the line moves too slowly. Other voters will skip voting on down-ballot races because it is too burdensome. There is already a drop-off of voters voting in these very local races.

It will complicate and slow down the process of counting votes and certifying elections. Complex formulas for calculating votes are confusing and will undermine voters’ confidence in the election system. When one jurisdiction cannot open and close its polls on time or certify their votes timely, it affects the entire state.

For all of these reasons, please vote an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 362.

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis