



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 362  
Montgomery County - Voting Methods**

This is enabling legislation to allow Montgomery County to adopt ranked choice voting or approval voting for some or all local elected offices.

This local bill passed the Montgomery County House Delegation unanimously and has the support of the County Executive and the entire County Council.

**Background**

Ranked choice and approval voting are designed to give voters more ability to express their preferences on their ballot and to ensure that election results truly reflect the electorate's desires. Such election systems ensure that the winning candidate has the approval of a majority of voters by taking into account their top preferences, not just their first choice. In doing so, the problem of a candidate winning without a majority is avoided.

Beyond simply providing more choices for voters, ranked choice voting and approval voting provide many advantages to the election and campaign process:

- Deters negative campaigning;<sup>1</sup>
- Can reduce the cost of conducting elections;<sup>2</sup>
- Encourages robust policy debates, in which candidates must appeal to voters not just as a first choice but as a second or third choice; and
- Most importantly, promotes diverse representation.<sup>3</sup>

**Ranked Choice Voting is Catching On**

Nationwide, 50 jurisdictions now use ranked choice voting, including 32 jurisdictions that used ranked choice voting in elections this November.

Cities already using ranked choice voting include Takoma Park, New York City, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Oakland, Santa Fe, Cambridge (MA), and Portland (ME), just to name a few. Other cities,

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fairvote.org/research\\_rcvcampaigncivility](https://www.fairvote.org/research_rcvcampaigncivility)

<sup>2</sup> <https://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/RankedChoiceVoting-FPI-Brief.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.fairvote.org/the\\_alternative\\_vote\\_can\\_increase\\_representation\\_of\\_women\\_and\\_people\\_of\\_color\\_in\\_us\\_elections](https://www.fairvote.org/the_alternative_vote_can_increase_representation_of_women_and_people_of_color_in_us_elections)

such as Ann Arbor (MI) and Boulder (CO), approved ballot initiatives this year that will move them to ranked choice voting.

Utah passed enabling legislation in 2019 allowing municipalities to opt in to ranked choice voting. To date, 23 cities there have opted in. Virginia passed similar legislation in 2020, allowing its municipalities to pursue ranked choice voting beginning in 2022.

This enabling legislation would give Montgomery County elected officials the option to adopt either ranked choice or approval voting.