

MC 1-24 “Montgomery County – Voting Methods”

TO: Montgomery County Delegation, Maryland General Assembly

FROM: Montgomery Group, Maryland Sierra Club

DATE: November 20, 2023

The Maryland Sierra Club, Montgomery Group urges the Montgomery County Delegation to introduce and seek passage of local bill MC 1-24 in the General Assembly’s 2024 session. The bill would authorize the Montgomery County Council to adopt ranked choice voting or approval voting for local elections. The bill replicates a local bill introduced by the Delegation in the 2023 General Assembly session, which the Maryland Sierra Club supported, and the Delegation also introduced the same or similar bills in prior sessions with the Sierra Club’s support.

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 in Montgomery County 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.

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.¹ Research also supports the premise that campaigns tend to be more civil and less negative when ranked choice voting is in use.²

This bill would 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.

For these reasons, we urge the Delegation to introduce MC 1-24 in the 2024 session.

Respectfully,

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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.