

MARY L. WASHINGTON, PH.D
Legislative District 43
Baltimore City

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair
Joint Committee on Ending
Homelessness

Chair
Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



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SUPPORT - SB 967
Legislative and Congressional Districts –
Criteria and Open Hearing Process (Fair Maps Act)

Dear Colleagues:

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a landmark piece of federal legislation in the United States that prohibits racial discrimination in voting. YET Fifty-five years later, we are still fighting to secure that right **BECAUSE** Maryland's voting maps boast some of the most egregious gerrymandered districts in the nation. It's time for a change.

SB 967, offers a constitutional amendment that would amend the standards to which legislative districts are required to conform in the state. Following each decennial census, the boundaries of state and congressional legislative districts are redrawn to adjust for population changes.

Currently, the Maryland Constitution requires state legislative districts to consist of adjoining territory, be compact in form, and be of substantially equal population, and due regard must be given to natural boundaries and the boundaries of political subdivisions. Congressional district boundaries, on the other hand, do not currently have redistricting standards beyond the federal requirements of equal population and adherence to the Voting Rights Act. **SB 967**, if ratified by a majority of Maryland voters in the next general election, would apply the current state redistricting standards to congressional districts.

Furthermore, it would require any redrawing of the districts to provide racial, ethnic, and language groups with an equal opportunity to participate in the political process, and ensure the integrity of areas with recognized similarities of interests - including racial, ethnic, economic, social, cultural, geographic, or historical identities - are respected in any boundary changes. It's critical that we have clear redistricting standards in place for both state and congressional legislative districts, and that the redrawing of boundaries following by the 2020 Census is transparent and fair. The Fair Maps Act is one step we can take to ensure equal representation, and uphold the principle for which our forefathers fought.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to give a favorable report for **SB 967**.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary Washington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Washington".

Senator Mary Washington, District 43