

Testimony on SB 255 – FAVORABLE
Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
January 27, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Marcia Greenberg and I am a resident of Lexington Park in St Mary's County. I am writing in support of **SB 255**. I am writing to urge you to redress a serious wrong: a system that is undemocratic, and that deprives voters of their right to choose their elected representatives. Over the years, we have made repeated efforts to terminate countywide, at-large voting for our County Commissioners, but have yet to see that antiquated and undemocratic system replaced by a fair system. Not surprisingly, since those who have power rarely volunteer to relinquish it, those who benefit from the current system have no interest in seeing it changed. No doubt our County Commissioners will try again this year to preserve their system – and once again, “we the people” must raise our voices to call for change, and for establishing a system that is fair.

Senators: From 1997 until 2002, I worked with USAID and its partner organizations to ensure that women would effectively contribute to and benefit from United States-funded democracy programs. Through that work, I saw many systems, in Eastern Europe and West Africa, that were neither fair nor democratic. I saw how people in power set rules to keep power, and how a failure of representation means that perspectives of average people and their needs are ignored.

At the same time, however, I came to appreciate the privilege and the power of my vote in the United States. I have exercised that privilege for half a century – since I was 18. I have voted in Massachusetts, in person and absentee; in upstate New York; and now in Maryland. While living in St Mary's County for over 20 years, I have voted in every election. I have also supported candidates with my time and financial resources – knocking on doors, making contributions, putting up signs, and sitting at voter information tables outside the polls. YET – and it is this that is shocking: NEVER have I seen my preferred candidate for County Commissioner win his or her race. And all the while, our county has been consistently represented by five, white, Republican men. They are not all bad, and I have applauded them for some of their policies. But during my time in Maryland, there has been no diversity of perspective, no women's voice at the table and behind closed doors, and no representation for our community of color.

It's appalling that the system for electing County Commissioners is rigged to undermine our votes. For state races, voters in Lexington Park are in District 29B, and have been able to elect John Bohanan and Brian Crosby (never a slam dunk, as has been demonstrated by the election of Deb Rey, but through competitive races). Yet those same voters have not been able to elect a Commissioner of their choice because voters *outside* that area, living elsewhere in the county, consistently out-vote them. Quite simply: a **majority of voters within a district** is consistently **out**-voted by a countywide majority living outside that district. **It's that simple -- and that wrong.**

While it should be clear, I offer an analogy to illustrate:

Imagine a school with 100 students, 55 boys and 45 girls, where students vote school-wide for all teachers -- choosing between admired athletes like LeBron James and respected attorneys like Stacey Abrams.

But suppose that while there are more girls in the English and history classes, they hear that all boys are committed to voting only for their sports heroes – for all classes. Though girls excited about Abrams explain that she would be a wonderful teacher, **this** is the predictable outcome:

When votes are cast, all 55 boys vote for athletes – for each and every subject. No matter that girls are the majority in the English and history classes; schoolwide, for all classes, the boys' votes prevail. Their 55 votes determine that athletes will teach all students, in all classes. And while one might suggest that there be more campaigning with which to persuade the boys to vote for Abrams for teacher, concerted efforts consistently fail.

Furthermore, this results in negative impacts for all, because no students benefit from teacher diversity. Both the boys and girls might otherwise benefit from a teacher like Stacey Abrams.

In St Mary's County, just as girls who are the majority in a class ought to have the chance to decide their teacher, voters who are the majority within a district ought to be able to choose their own Commissioner – without being out-voted by cumulative, countywide votes. ***It's simply wrong that one majority block of county voters determines the outcome for all five Commissioners, in each and every district.***

Distinguished members of this committee: Please recognize that the current system is unfair and undemocratic. The state of Maryland should ensure democratic systems and fairness. I urge you to issue a **favorable** report on SB 255.