

## HB0488

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Hello. My name is Christopher Wilkening, and I submit this testimony in strong opposition to HB0488. I am a resident of Maryland.

Maryland is not operating from a position of strength right now. Residents are dealing with high taxes, persistent public safety concerns, economic pressure on families, and growing frustration with the direction of state leadership. Confidence in Annapolis is gone. In that environment, pushing through a controversial redistricting overhaul is not responsible governance. Rather, it is political maneuvering at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons.

HB0488 does not arise from a public demand for better representation. It arises from political opportunity. The state government has shown a disappointing pattern of expanding control, increasing spending irresponsibly, and dismissing dissenting viewpoints. This bill fits that pattern. Instead of addressing affordability, economic competitiveness, or public safety, leadership is focused on restructuring the political map in a way that advantages those already in power.

Maryland is not Texas, California, or any other state used as a political reference point. Our regions are distinct. Our economy is distinct. Our communities are distinct. Yet this proposal treats representation as a numbers game rather than a reflection of real geographic, economic, and cultural differences. That shamefully undermines public trust in a process that should be above partisan strategy.

This bill would dismantle Maryland's only remaining GOP-controlled congressional district, currently represented by Congressman Andy Harris. Regardless of party, eliminating the last meaningful opposition district sends a clear message: balance is not welcome. The Eastern Shore and other rural communities already feel disconnected from Annapolis decision-making. This map would further dilute their voice and subject them to policy priorities driven almost entirely by urban political interests.

We are already seeing the consequences of one-party dominance at the state level: out of control spending, growing fiscal strain, regulatory expansion, and policies that are disconnected from the economic realities of working families and small businesses. Concentrating even more political power in fewer hands is not a solution — it is an accelerant.

Redistricting should protect voters from politicians, not protect politicians from voters. Competitive districts create accountability. HB0488 moves Maryland further toward a system where outcomes are decided before voters ever cast a ballot. That destroys democracy, discourages civic engagement, and fuels public cynicism.

At a time when Maryland faces serious fiscal and economic challenges, leadership should be focused on stability, growth, and restoring trust — not redrawing maps in a way that appears designed to cement political control for the next decade.

I was raised to believe that leadership is stewardship, that you leave institutions stronger, fairer, and more trustworthy than you found them. HB0488 fails that test miserably. It prioritizes political advantage over public confidence and long-term democratic health.

For these reasons, I strongly oppose HB0488. Maryland deserves representation shaped by communities and fairness — not by those already in power trying to secure more of it.

Thank you for your time.

Christopher Wilkening