



MARYLAND FEDERATION *of* Republican Women

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman, and Members, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the almost 1200 members of the Maryland Federation of Republican Women, representing citizens from across Maryland, I am writing to ask you for a Favorable Report on SB266 and SB284. These bills preserve and insure the rights and representation of all our citizens. Both of these bills are designed to improve our redistricting process. This is an issue that is not partisan. By voting in favor of these reforms, every member of the Legislature can show all of their constituents that there is indeed a bipartisan desire to do better than has been done in the past.

I know you have heard all the arguments as to why we believe it is so important to address the issues of Legislative and Congressional redistricting. We believe it is essential to establish a Legislative and Congressional Redistricting and Apportionment Commission as an independent unit of State government. We have seen not only in our own State but across the Country, in both blue and red states, that redistricting has repeatedly been used as a tool of the majority Party to protect and insure their continued majorities in both their Congress and the State Legislature.

SB284 will create a fair and impartial Redistricting Commission that, following the decennial census, will be responsible for drawing our Congressional and Legislative maps that are blind to Party affiliation of the incumbent elected officials and respect geographical, natural, and city/county existing boundaries, creating compact and contiguous districts of individuals with similar interests. Furthermore, a majority of Marylanders support the creation of this commission and want our State to break the cycle of drawing our maps based on partisan interests.

SB266 addresses another problem we have in this State affecting representation. This bill will allow the voters the opportunity to amend the State Constitution to establish 3 Single-Member House of Delegates Districts in each Legislative District. Our Constitution guarantees each citizen of Maryland equal representation in the Legislature. Currently that does not exist. Some citizens are represented by three Delegates, some by two, and some by one. The voters should be given the opportunity to decide if they would prefer to change this inequality. Single-member districts make sense in that they provide a delegate with a smaller number of constituents thus enabling them to get to know them better and therefore represent their interests and concerns better. Constituents have a clear understanding of exactly who represents them and where to turn for help if needed.

In conclusion, the members of the Maryland Federation of Republican Women strongly support a Favorable Report for both SB284 and SB266 in the hope that Maryland will be proactive about fixing our current problem with redistricting and enact a process to create an independent Legislative and Congressional Redistricting and Apportionment Commission that will create maps that are fair to all Maryland citizens and take further steps to insure the creation of fair, compact, contiguous Legislative and Congressional districts, free from partisan influence.

Thank you,

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