

JHEANELLE WILKINS
Legislative District 20
Montgomery County

PARLIAMENTARIAN

Ways and Means Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 350
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3493 · 301-858-3493
800-492-7122 Ext. 3493
Fax 410-841-3445 · 301-858-3445
Jheanelle.Wilkins@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 2, 2020

House Bill 1431 Legislative and Congressional Districts – Criteria and Open Hearing Process (Fair Maps Act)

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present House Bill 1431 Legislative and Congressional Districts – Criteria and Open Hearing Process (Fair Maps Act), which is 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. 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.

HB 1431, 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 of "one person, one vote." For these reasons, I urge the committee to give a **favorable** report for **HB 1431**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jheanelle Wilkins".

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins