

ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
COMMISSIONERS OF
ST. MARY'S COUNTY

Eric Colvin



James R. Guy, President
Eric Colvin, Commissioner
Michael L. Hewitt, Commissioner
Todd B. Morgan, Commissioner
John E. O'Connor, Commissioner

March 16, 2021

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chairman
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 655 - Local Government – County Commissioner Elections – District Voting
Hearing: March 18, 2021

Dear Senator Pinsky and the members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee:

When I was first elected as a County Commissioner, I made a vow to myself that I would never base my decisions on political expediency or reelection desires. I try to approach every decision with the mindset of what is fair, equitable, and best for my county. With that in mind, I am submitting this written testimony in opposition of Delegate Crosby's bill 655 that would change the way that county commissioners are elected.

This bill would result in a fundamental change in how we work. Currently, Commissioners in St. Mary's County are elected by the entire county with the requirement of living in particular districts. This ensures that there is a diverse geographical representation but also ensures that every Commissioner is required to consider the needs of the entire county as a whole.

My concern with Delegate Crosby's proposal is that it could negatively impact districts represented by the party that is not in the majority in the county. This bill would turn the Commissioner job into a mentality of "What can I bring home to my district?" Delegate Crosby has advocated for this bill by pointing out how state and federal representatives operate, and therefore it would be good for the county. I would argue the opposite because our counties are small enough geographic areas that it makes sense to represent the entire county. As Commissioners, we need to think about the overall good for the entire county, not just one area—and I would argue that the county is a small enough region that this method works!

My fear and concern are that this proposal will fragment and harm local governance. Delegate Crosby has argued that areas of his district do not receive adequate resources or representation at the local level—this is false. The area he speaks of has more parks than any other region of the county, the only county-owned and operated swimming pool, county-run gymnastics center, sprayground, skate park, one of the three libraries in the county, and multiple other ongoing

projects. The argument I would make is that because we are elected to represent the county as a whole, we are able to provide resources exactly where they are needed and not solely based on the concept of "bringing home the bacon" to our districts. The change that Delegate Crosby has proposed could result in fewer resources going to his own district's citizens.

Thank you all for the work that you do and for receiving this testimony on the bill. I wish you continued success and ask that you do not hesitate to reach back if there is any additional information that I can provide to help your decision-making.

Sincerely,



Eric Colvin
County Commissioner, District 1
St. Mary's County