



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

HB 339 Legislative Districts – Standards

POSITION: Support

Date: February 22, 2021

The League of Women Voters supports a state redistricting process and standards that promote fair and effective representation of the entire population of Maryland in the General Assembly. Partisan influence in the redistricting process has created unfairness by either limiting access to officials or reducing the measure of accountability elected officials have to their full electorate. This bill seeks to prevent these things by removing partisan influence from the redistricting process.

Election maps are adjusted every ten years after the Census to account for population shifts and ensure each district has substantially equally populations. However, since 1812 US politicians on both sides of the aisle have also used the redistricting process to provide their party with an advantage in elections for the coming decade. Using our current technology, politicians today can achieve this with unprecedented precision. This bill would attempt to remove that temptation by removing consideration of political affiliation of voters from the process.

After the 2010 Census, seven states (CO, MI, MO, NY, OH, UT and VA) adopted commissions to draw these districts to reduce partisan influence, for a total of eighteen states. Although this bill doesn't call for a commission, Maryland should at least join them in strengthening our democracy by limiting partisanship.

We are all aware of the growing apathy or, more lately, civil unrest of voters who believe that the system is rigged, and that their vote doesn't matter. We think that ignoring partisanship in the redistricting process would help to restore the faith of voters in their elected officials.

We urge a favorable report on HB 339.