

December 3, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

First, I would like to thank for the opportunity given to testify in this important once-in-a-decade event for the state of Maryland. When I had the opportunity to look at the proposed maps by the legislature, I felt completely disappointed with the fact that the maps are separating communities and are not providing a fair redistribution that could serve better residents in the 8 districts of the state. As someone who lives in Gaithersburg, MD, currently represented in district 6, I feel that the necessities from the whole district are not fully covered with the current map, and that it has done more harm than good. And to my disappointment, I am seeing the proposed maps are repeating the same flaws from the 2010 map, disproportionally giving representation into jurisdictions that could be served better by other districts.

In the years that I've been living in Maryland, I was able to see how communities work, and how are being served in the best interest of their citizens. We all know for a fact that most of the state leans towards one party, but that should not be an excuse to have communities underrepresented and separated with the current maps. For example, the necessities from someone who lives in parts of western Maryland such as Hagerstown, Frostburg, Cumberland or even Frederick, are not the same as someone who lives in places such as Gaithersburg or Germantown. Same thing goes with the city of Baltimore, which is represented by 3 districts, when the latest statistics from the census has shown a population decline within the city, it does not justify the fact of being split and represented into 3 districts, as it is currently happening. What this is doing, is harming the city of Baltimore, and the communities in Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County and Howard County, that are also part of the districts that represent the city of Baltimore.

What I suggest is that a proposed map should count the real necessities of the people and the communities, otherwise, what we are going to have, is a Maryland congressional delegation that will only represent a few, rather than most of the people who lives here. One way to do this, is to keep communities in whole, such as keeping the city of Baltimore into 1 single district rather than splitting it into 3, that way, the necessities from all Baltimoreans will be better served, instead of someone who take bits and pieces of Baltimore, with other jurisdictions. Second, I suggest to at least consider the map drawn by the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission, which is a good example for the country on how things are done, by evaluating the necessities of each community, rather than the interest of politicians.

Need I remind the legislature, that as voters, we the people, are the ones that should have the power to decide who is going to represent us in Annapolis and in Congress, not the other way around. The people of Maryland are watching closely the actions of the legislature, which are simply detrimental and not in favor of the real necessities of the Marylanders. The only thing I am asking, is to have a fair representation, and a representation that I can feel is benefitting my community. Please consider these following days to reflect your actions, and to make things

right for the benefit of the State. By doing the right thing of giving Maryland fair maps, the legislature will be setting example in the United States about how things should be done. We are living difficult times with all things going around, and as Marylanders, we need to stand together to improve our communities, not fighting or trying to torpedo efforts to improve the quality of living for all Marylanders.

Thank you and Happy Holidays,

Jesus A. Valentin-Ruiz