

March 15, 2021

**Testimony on HB 965 –
Congressional Districts - Standards
Rules and Executive Nominations**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 965, which would be a significant step forward in the creation of fair congressional districts in Maryland.

Maryland, like every other state, draws new congressional lines every ten years to update the maps for population changes. However, our state ranks as one of the worst in the nation when it comes to the compactness of its Congressional districts. Four of our eight districts are among the most gerrymandered in the country. The current lines divide communities, reducing those communities' influence with their elected officials and causing voters to feel manipulated by the process.

While not a total solution to the problem of partisan gerrymandering, HB 965 would be a significant step forward, requiring our Congressional districts to adhere to non-partisan principles that have helped to alleviate concerns of citizens in other states over politicians giving themselves unfair partisan advantages in the drawing of Congressional district lines.

Redistricting is more than just a partisan concern. When congressional districts cut through our counties, neighborhoods, and communities, the voice of those communities is fractured too. And the accountability between our elected officials and their constituents is equally fragmented. Voters feel the elections are rigged – that elected officials are choosing their voters, not the other way around.

Redistricting maps need to give fair representation to all, to protect communities, and to create districts that a legislator can understand and speak for. HB 965 would damper politically opportunistic redistricting for our Congressional districts and we urge a favorable report.