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HB 1: Congressional Redistricting Plan SUPPORT

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Healey and the House Rules and Executive Appointments Committee.

AFT-Maryland is the statewide organization for unions such as the Maryland Professional Employees Council, AFT Healthcare-Maryland, Baltimore County Federation of Public Employees, City Union of Baltimore, and the Baltimore Teachers Union. We submit this written testimony in support of HB 1, the Congressional redistricting map proposed by the Legislative Redistricting Advisory Committee as it maintains three congressional districts for Baltimore City.

We would like to commend the commission for not only having numerous meetings across the state and online so that residents may give input on what they believe should be prioritized when considering the redrawing of districts, but that the commission has also made drafts of maps under consideration available to the public for comment. Maintaining three congressional representatives is imperative to the public school system in Baltimore City, mainly because, unlike all other jurisdictions in the state, the vast majority of Baltimore City public schools fall under the jurisdiction of Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Because it is imperative that, as Maryland sets out to redraw its congressional boundaries, consideration be given to draw districts so the voices of students' and their families, who are residents served by Title I schools, are not diminished. Baltimore's Title I schools must have multiple, strong voices fighting for fair funding and accountability standards on Capitol Hill, AFT-Maryland supports HB 1.

What is Title I?

Title I is a provision in the Every Student Succeeds Act that calls for federal grants to help schools where a large number of students come from low-income families. Additionally, Title I schools, through the Every Student Succeeds Act, are held to strict accountability standards; when those standards are not met, the schools can be put under comprehensive or targeted assistance programs designed to identify causes for the school's inability to meet those standards.

How has Title I been implemented in Maryland? What districts have it?

Each of the 24 counties and local education agencies in the state of Maryland has at least one Title I school, and several counties have an especially large number. For instance, in the 2020-21 school year, the Maryland State Department of Education reported 446 public schools statewide were Title I schools; 128 of those schools are in Baltimore City.

This means that 29% reside in just one school district. As Baltimore City currently lists 162 schools in its portfolio, this means 79% percent, or about 4 out of every 5 of our schools are Title I, making them eligible for additional federal funds in exchange for stricter accountability standards.

Federal funds and accountability standards flowing from the federal Every Student Succeeds Act is vital to the schools and students of Baltimore City. Because the map proposed by the Legislative Redistricting Advisory Committee maintains Baltimore City's-- and thus its Title I schools'-- voice in our nation's capital, we urge a favorable report for HB1. Thank you.