



MARYLAND CITIZENS REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

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Hearing Date: December 6, 2021 - 12:30 p.m.
Bill No: SB0002/HB0002
Committees: Senate Reapportionment and Redistricting Committee
House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee
Position: Favorable
Testimony from: The Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission
Dr. Kathleen Hetherington - Co-Chair
Walter Olson - Co-Chair
The Honorable Alexander Williams, Jr. - Co-Chair

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The Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission (the Commission) is pleased to offer this testimony to share information about the work of our group and the resulting maps we provided to Governor Hogan. These maps are now before you for consideration and we would like to provide you with more detailed information about the Commission's process and procedures.

The Commission is extremely proud of our work and the maps we have produced.

- Our maps offer minimal splits of counties and municipalities.
- They offer a highly understandable layout of congressional districts which, in the past, have been woefully complex.
- We were extremely responsive to public comment, feedback, and reaction. This included revamping maps for southeast Baltimore County, St. Mary's County, and the Towson and Pikesville areas of Baltimore County in response to public requests for changes of draft maps and in the consideration of communities of interest.
- We received an "A" rating for partisan fairness from the Princeton Gerrymandering Project for our draft proposed congressional maps.

How the Commission went about accomplishing its mission.

- On January 12, 2021, Governor Hogan issued an [Executive Order](#) forming the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission to consist of three co-chairs and six commissioners.
- The Governor appointed the three co-chairs, one from each party and one unaffiliated, who then chose the additional six members, two from each party and two unaffiliated, from more than 400 citizen applications.
- The Citizens Commission was charged with revising the congressional and legislative district lines in a fair and impartial manner.
- As an equal mix of Democrats, Republicans, and Unaffiliated, our members embraced our mission to create new district boundaries that are free from political influence and offer the opportunity for fair elections in Maryland.
- To accomplish our mission, the Citizens Commission developed a transparent process, allowing Marylanders not only to observe the group's work, but also to engage in the process.
- The Commission opened a website so the public could become more familiar with the redistricting process and stay informed as to the events of the Commission.
- The Citizens Commission provided an online, public mapping application portal for citizens to review census tracts and characteristics of areas throughout the state, prepare and submit maps of their own.
- Draft maps prepared by the Commission were posted to the site throughout the process and allowed for the public to comment on them before we held final votes.

The public engaged in the process and was an integral part of the Commission's final decisions.

- The Commission's public meetings began on May 5, 2021 and included numerous working sessions among members to learn about the process, discuss the data and draft maps.
- Most of the meetings included testimony from the public. Aside from the public meetings we also held numerous working sessions for the Commission to conduct our work.
- Three rounds of public meetings were held to receive valuable input from the public as to the redistricting process. Due to the continuing issues with Covid, these meetings were held virtually through Zoom. This also allowed us to provide for simultaneous transcription as well as simultaneous Spanish translation on an accompanying YouTube broadcast of the meetings.
- The Commission heard 231 separate testimony accounts from members of the public.
- Round One occurred between June 9th and July 28th including:
 - Eight regional meetings during which members of the public could share their thoughts and concerns regarding redistricting in advance of the release of 2020 Census data.
 - 163 separate testimonies from members of the public and elected officials.
 - Zoom and YouTube with a viewership of more than 2100 people.

- Round Two was held between September 9th and September 20th.
 - Included four statewide virtual meetings during which Marylanders were able to submit their own maps through a portal on the website and present them to the Commission with live testimony; written testimony was also accepted.
 - The Commission heard 21 separate testimonies.
 - More than 1000 people viewed the meetings on either Zoom or YouTube.
 - During Round 2 the Commission received 70 citizen map submissions.
 - Each citizen submission was posted to the public website and reviewed by the Commission.
- The Commission held six public working sessions during September 2021 to draft maps for public review and comment.
 - This was done along with the Commission's Voting Rights Act (VRA) and American election law expert, Professor Nathaniel Persily of Stanford University Law School.
- Round Three was held each Wednesday evening in October between October 6th and 27th.
 - Included four public meetings at which Marylanders could present testimony regarding the maps drawn by the Commission, maps submitted by citizens or their own map submissions.
 - The Commission heard 46 separate testimonies.
 - The total viewership online was almost 1000.
- In total, the Citizens Commission received 86 public map submissions via the portal and through email.
- Commissioners also held public working sessions at the completion of public testimony in order to suggest and address modifications to maps, including discussions regarding the VRA, communities of interest and other matters of importance to the criteria for drafting district boundaries.
- The Citizens Commission was responsive to public reaction and modified maps in the areas of Southeast Baltimore County, St. Mary's County, Towson, southern Montgomery County, and other areas in response to public requests.
 - Addressed issues for "Communities of Interest," including modifying the boundary lines impacting a Jewish community (including consideration of the Eruv) in Baltimore County.
- As the Citizen Commission voted upon "Final Proposed Draft Maps," each map was posted to the website.
- The website also included a map viewer to allow residents to enter an address and determine in which district it was located.

A summary of the Citizens Commission's outreach efforts and public engagement:

- The Commission had more than 4,127 attendees at the virtual public meetings including various citizens as well as organizational leaders and elected officials.
- The Commission was supported by the Maryland Department of Planning which facilitated social media, updating the Commission's website and the distribution of meeting alerts and press releases.
- Social media posts resulted in more than 100,061 impressions on Twitter and a reach of more than 92,607 on Facebook.
- For each meeting, notifications were sent out via press release to more than 46,000 contacts. including the media, local, county, and state elected officials, and other organizations and individuals.
- Promotional materials were translated in Spanish and distributed to the Latino community by the Commission's Hispanic advisor, Gloria Aparicio Blackwell, Founder and Director of the University of Maryland Office of Community Engagement.
- Public virtual meetings at which testimony was offered provided live Spanish translation done in partnership with the University of Maryland Spanish Department.
- Closed-captioning for the hearing-impaired was also provided.

As a commission of volunteers, we worked closely as a group with a common goal. Even though we disagreed on various matters, we were able to talk things through for the best possible outcome for all of Maryland. These outcomes resulted in the final maps presented to you from the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission, and of which we are extremely proud.

Common themes were expressed by each of our members at the close of our work as a group.

- A sense of pride in the dedication and commitment of the Commissioners.
- A sense of overcoming challenges in the spirit of compromise to achieve fair results.
- Pride in our responsiveness to the communities that voiced their concerns to our Commission.

At the completion of our last meeting, Professor Nate Perily, with whom our Commission worked diligently to ensure our maps would be in compliance with the Voting Rights Act, told our Commission that our work should be held out as a model for the way things should be done across the nation.

He is nationally renowned as an expert in redistricting law and the American democratic process and advises state and local jurisdictions across the county. This accolade is meaningful and solidifies the notion that this process can be completed successfully with input from the public and a transparent process.

We are proud of the work we accomplished and thank you for the opportunity to share our official redistricting maps for your consideration. For the foregoing reasons, we respectfully request a favorable committee report of SB0002/HB0002. Detailed map books have been distributed to all committee members and we are happy to answer any questions you may have.