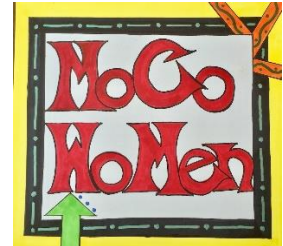


DIVERSITY MATTERS

For an Inclusive America

INDIVISIBLE
MONTGOMERY



December 3, 2021

Dear Speaker Jones:

We are writing to provide our strong support for a new legislative map that ensures equitable representation of Maryland’s increasingly diverse population across ALL EIGHT of Maryland’s districts. We particularly urge redrawing MD-1 to create stronger representation for all Marylanders.

This letter reflects the view of **Diversity Matters**, a grassroots organization of concerned citizens who believe that America’s strength lies in its diversity. We support elected officials and candidates for office that commit to our diversity pipeline pledge. Co-signatories to this letter include **Indivisible Montgomery**, a group of people in Montgomery County working together for democracy, justice and empowerment for all Americans; **DoTheMostGood (DTMG)**, a grassroots organization based in Montgomery County with over 3000 members uniting like-minded people and partner organizations in political action and civic engagement to further inclusive, progressive values locally and nationally; and **MoCoWoMen**, a group dedicated to supporting more informed and active participation in our democracy at all levels. In Maryland, all our organizations have partnered with the Blue Wave Maryland Coalition and have supported events to elevate diversity and inclusion in government at county, state and national levels.

We also want to express strong opposition to Governor Hogan’s “citizen redistricting” initiative. Redlining and other historical inequities in Maryland have long affected where many of its citizens can live. We believe there can be no good faith ‘fair’ maps that do not account for and address these patterns. Communities of color, including Black, Latino and new immigrant communities, have been densely clustered in pockets of the state. Our communities have had to face voter suppression for generations. Today, although Maryland now has a majority-minority population, our voters are still not adequately represented. This is because voters of

color intentionally remain geographically segregated and thus are not adequately represented across Maryland's Congressional delegation. **Do not draw lines that reinforce longstanding dilution of our voices and our votes.**

Geography should not be used to perpetuate skewed representation. We note with concern that the citizen redistricting initiative, and even well-meaning groups like Fair Maps are undermining equitable representation for all our communities. The persuasiveness of their case rests on implicit bias. Maps may look fair when viewers are only looking at geographic boundaries. But voters are not evenly distributed over land parcels. Congressional districts must provide **equity** in representation, recognizing that dense areas have long been under-represented.

Please also consider that, as documented by Urban Institute, voters of color were undercounted in the 2020 census. In Maryland, Blacks, Latinos and immigrants were undercounted; Whites were overcounted. With this in mind, it is incumbent upon the Maryland legislature to consider not only inequitable residential patterns across the state, but also the likelihood that traditionally minority areas were undercounted. Making sure these undercounted communities have access to strong representation ACROSS the Maryland Congressional delegation should be a top priority.

Finally, we are mindful that Maryland's actions will have consequences for the national Congressional balance of power in 2020. Across the country, the numbers of voters from our communities are rising. Yet, Republican legislatures across the country are succeeding in gerrymandering districts in ways that ensure our communities have NO representation in some state Congressional delegations. For all these reasons we believe it is entirely reasonable to draw Maryland districts to ensure that our communities' voices are not cancelled out by regressive and unrepresentative figures catering to a narrow Republican base.

Let our votes matter across all eight of Maryland's districts, including MD-1. Please do not be swayed by seemingly well-meaning calls for "fair" maps: **people, and not land areas, should choose our representatives.** No map in America can yet be considered 'fair' when so many of our communities still face overwhelming barriers just to cast their vote, and when their votes are routinely diluted by decades of combined redlining and gerrymandering.

Sincerely,

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CC: Bill Ferguson, President, Maryland State Senate