

Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and members of the House Ways & Means Committee.

My name is Marcia Greenberg, and I live in Lexington Park in St. Mary's County. I am speaking **in support of HB 655** to change from **countywide** to **district-specific** voting for County Commissioners.

In America, we expect elected officials to be chosen by the voters they represent. In St Mary's, this applies to our federal and state representatives- but **not** to our local officials: Rather than being elected by voters in districts they represent, Commissioners are elected by voters countywide. **Note** that if that system were applied at the federal level, voters nationwide would be electing Maryland's senators!

Our current system is problematic because it **prevents** district residents from determining who represents them, **and it causes** Commissioners representing each district to **court** voters countywide.

But there's another issue: **The system works against localized projects**. I offer an illustration:

For several years, residents in the southern part of St. Mary's have advocated for a **Community Center to meet local needs**, including: indoor spaces for youth activities; programming to support young peoples' educational and employment success; and community space to foster relationships among military, retirees and locals, and across racial and generational divisions. Determined efforts have included gathering petitions and data, building partnerships, and disseminating information.

But because of the Center's purposes, the **benefits would be local – which, unfortunately, generates a conflict:**

Within the current system, a Commissioner whose district's voters passionately advocate for a local project, finds it necessary to justify it to voters countywide. **Instead, Commissioners should be elected by, and therefore fully accountable to, the residents of their districts.**

In closing, I **urge** this committee to issue a **favorable report on HB 655**. Thank you!