

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

I am David Deaderick, a 26-year resident of Lexington Park in St. Mary's County. I speak in support of HB 655.

The at-large method of electing members of the boards of county commissioners from each commissioner district – currently the practice in just a few of Maryland's counties – is simply wrong. It is not equitable or just, as it discriminates against the electoral power of the very people it purports to represent.

It robs people within each commissioner district of their vote on matters of concern within the district. It yields instead to the influence of those who have no concern for those matters, whether of policy, infrastructure or relief so critical to the district. Thus, it nullifies votes, taking away from citizens the very representation that a democracy is designed to ensure, subjecting their votes to gerrymandering without bothering to change district boundaries.

It is fundamental to democratic elections that the people within a jurisdiction be empowered to elect their own representatives. To deny them this power is to engage arguably in a form of voter suppression by diluting their vote and denying proper representation.

HB 655 will make districts more representative, giving electoral power where it belongs with a precision that a representative system intends to provide. Thus, I ask for a favorable report on this bill.