

Merideth Taylor
19089 Point Lookout Road
Lexington Park, MD 20653

January 25, 2021

Subject: HB0655: Local Government – County Commissioner Elections – District Voting
Ways and Means Committee – February 9th, 2021
FAVORABLE

Dear Delegate Kaiser and members of the Committee,

I request a favorable finding for HB0655, Local Government – County Commissioner Elections – District Voting.

St. Mary's County has a representation problem. When we moved to the county in 1990, there was an African American male commissioner, the first African American commissioner in the county's history and the last. Since then, we have been represented by all white commissioners only four of whom have been women. It's also the case that the commissioner boards have been overwhelmingly Republican. The population of the county in 2019 was 50% female, 73.5% white 14.9% black 5% Hispanic. Obviously, the all-white, all-male Board who currently serve the county do not reflect the diversity of perspectives, identities, or views of their constituency. This is particularly true of district #4, where I live.

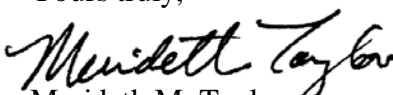
I live in Lexington Park in district #4, the most densely populated district with the highest number of non-white residents. In 2018, Lexington Park, MD had a population of 11.8k people with a median age of 30 and a median household income of \$68,804. An estimated 15% live below the poverty line. The price of homes is lower than the national average and the homeownership rate in Lexington Park is 36.5%, which is lower than the national average of 63.9%. The schools in this district have the highest number of students on free and reduced-fee meals in the county.

Because commissioner candidates are elected by the entire county, rather than the district they will represent, the voters in my district have always had our voting power diluted by the county-wide vote which is majority white, conservative, and rural. This is a form of voter suppression, and it should be changed. I want to vote for the commissioner who will represent me and my district, who will be a voice for our needs and goals.

Commissioner O'Connor, like the other current commissioners is opposed to this change. It is telling that he objected, suggesting it would create **disunity**. I think a better word would be **diversity**. Yes, people whose voices have not been heard may at last come to the table.

I appreciate Del. Crosby's work on behalf of his constituents. This is an important Bill. It is a civil rights bill and it's time has come!

Yours truly,


Merideth M. Taylor
Lexington Park, MD