



Randallstown

P.O. Box 731 Randallstown, MD 21133

March 14, 2023

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SUPPORT SB 0878 Voting Rights Act of 2023-Counties and Municipalities

Dear Chair Feldman, VC Kagan and Committee Members:

The Randallstown NAACP is based in Baltimore County with a membership of 500 individuals throughout the region. May it be known the mission of the Randallstown NAACP is to secure equal rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and wellbeing of all persons in Baltimore County and the State of Maryland.

The plight of African American political representation in American politics has been very turbulent. Immediately following the Civil War, there was a substantial increase in the number of African Americans elected. However, their tenure would be short-lived. Once African Americans took their places in the legislative chambers, many southern whites responded with violence, intimidation tactics, and the creation of racial gerrymanders to dilute minority-voting strength. The passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its subsequent amendments called for the creation of minority majority districts that allowed African Americans to elect the candidate of their choice. This allowed African Americans to elect a number of blacks to serve in political offices.

One of the signature achievements of the civil rights movement was to provide African Americans with an opportunity to exercise their constitutional right to vote. This allowed them to enjoy full inclusion in American society by electing representatives who could make much needed changes to public policies and resources that would alleviate racial inequality.

In Baltimore County the African American population is 35% and should equate to two council members. The fourth district has over 72% African Americans in the district. This fully illustrates the concept of packing which is illegal. Packing is the term used when minority voters are compressed into a small number of districts when they could effectively control more. This is the case in Baltimore County. No African American has won elected office in a white majority district in Baltimore County. We could move precincts 02-028 and 02-009 to the second councilmanic district to create a second African American district of 53%. We could make a third district with African Americans having a dominant percentage in the first councilmanic district; by adding Precinct 02-031, 02-001, 02-002, and 02-003 which would restore Woodlawn. The fourth councilmanic district would be the third minority majority district with over 60% African Americans.

However, the Baltimore County Council did not hear our warnings. The US District Court threw out the council's first map. The new map still didn't give us the desired result of equal representation. In fact the current county council has less diversity than the previous- 6 white men and 1 African American for a county that has 54% residents of color.

This bill would give regular citizens and communities another tool to ensure equal representation. **The Randallstown Branch of the NAACP urges a favorable report from the committee on SB 0878.**

Best,

Ryan Coleman
Randallstown NAACP, President