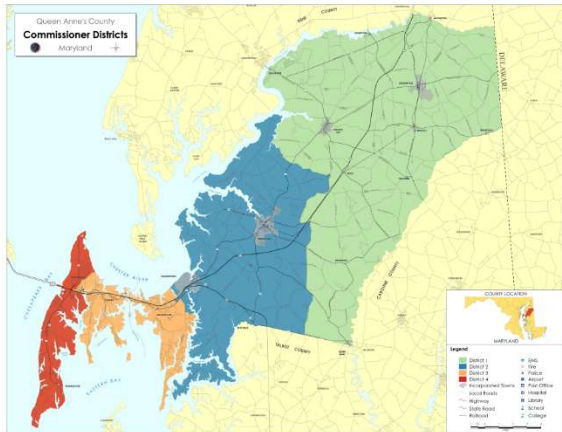


To: Honorable Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Ways & Means Committee
From: Ashley Kaiser, Town Councilperson, Centreville, MD
RE: **House Bill 447 – Local Elections - County Commissioner - District Voting – Requesting a FAVORABLE REPORT**

As a resident and municipal official in an affected county, I strongly support House Bill 447.



In Queen Anne's County, the election of all members at large is detrimental to the adequate representation of rural communities. You can see by the disparate sizes of the districts on the map, there is a serious concentration of population closer to the bay compared to the agricultural communities in the northern part of the county.

The needs of these communities and the residents within them vary greatly. A resident of Templeville in district one, for example, faces an hour commute if they were to work at the Maryland State House. That same resident's children would see thirty-minute commute to the high school they attend. A resident of the Bay City community in district four has only a twenty-minute commute if they were to work at the State House while their children would have a mere six-minute commute to school. This is only one small facet of life but clearly demonstrates the differences between these two communities. Each of these hypothetical families deserves representation from someone who understands their concerns and feels committed and responsible to the residents of their district.

Whether it is reality or perception, the feeling among many residents in Queen Anne's County is that our representatives need only cater to the needs of Kent Island to secure re-election and not place any focus on the needs of other areas. This seems particularly harmful to the many municipalities in the County, none of which are in the highly populated area near the bay.

I believe individual residents, families, businesses, and municipalities would all benefit from in-district representatives that are elected only by their districts. A member of the County Commission should feel a strong sense of responsibility to the residents of their district. A move to district based voting formalizes the need for each member to represent the unique needs of their communities and creates possibilities for more competitive elections that could lead to a more diverse and truly representative County Commission.

Competitive elections and stronger representation would result in higher voter turnout. When more people vote, democracy wins.

I urge a favorable report on House Bill 447.