

**ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY**

*David A. Weiskopf, County Attorney
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Commissioners of St. Mary's County

James R. Guy, President
Michael R. Alderson, Jr., Commissioner
Eric S. Colvin, Commissioner
Michael L. Hewitt, Commissioner
Scott R. Ostrow, Commissioner

HB 447
Local Elections - County Commissioner - District Voting

OPPOSE

February 14, 2023

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Atterbeary and the Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County have asked the Office of the County Attorney to present testimony on their behalf in-person at the hearing on **HB 447 - Local Elections - County Commissioner - District Voting**. The Commissioners **OPPOSE** the proposed legislation.

On January 31, the Commissioners unanimously voted to oppose this legislation unless it is first ratified by a vote of the County's citizens in a public referendum. A letter signed by the Commissioner President setting forth the Commissioners' position has been submitted to the Committee.

Unfortunately, the hearing on this bill has been scheduled on the same day the Commissioners will hold both a regular meeting and a budget work session for the upcoming fiscal year. Consequently, the Commissioners are unable to attend the hearing and offer live testimony. However, the Commissioners strongly feel a representative of St. Mary's County should be present to offer testimony on this bill and have asked the Office of the County Attorney to testify on their behalf and to answer any questions the Committee may have.

The Commissioners are united in their concern the proposed legislation will reduce each Countian's right to vote for his or her elected officials. Should this proposed legislation be enacted, our current right to vote for all five of our Commissioners will be reduced to voting for only two. Local voter input, local accountability, and local autonomy will each be diminished should this legislation be enacted.

The Commissioners' earnest conviction is that this important issue, affecting the County's basic democratic process, should only be decided by a majority of the citizens it will affect. Accordingly, the Commissioners request an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 447.

Very truly yours,



John Sterling Kouser
Assistant County Attorney

CC: Senator Jack Bailey
Delegate Matthew Morgan
Delegate Todd Morgan
Delegate Brian Crosby
Commissioner President James Randy Guy
Commissioner Mike Alderson, Jr.
Commissioner Eric Colvin
Commissioner Michael Hewitt
Commissioner Scott R. Ostrow
David Weiskopf, Interim County Administrator/County Attorney