

To : Honorable Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and distinguished Members of the Ways and Means Committee.

From: Elaine McNeil, Chair, Queen Anne's County Democratic Central Committee

**RE House Bill 447 -Local Elections-County Commissioner-District Voting -Requesting a favorable report.**

Queen Anne's County Democratic Central Committee is in support of **House Bill 447** which concerns local county commissioner district voting in Maryland counties. Personally, I have lived and worked in this county for almost forty-four years.

As a committee, we support this Bill because it is the democratic and constitutional responsibility of representatives to be accountable to their constituents. For us, it is about responsibility, fairness and best practices in local government.

Many people in Queen Anne's four districts feel their interests are not considered. The districts are relatively equal in population, but they are vastly different in their density and diversity. There is also one at large district but all five are elected at large. In campaigns the candidates focus is on the more demographically compact (Census data density 590.7) area close to the Bay. The first District, commonly referred to as "North County" is almost the size of the other three put together. (Census data density 59.8) Diversity is also worth noting. In District 1 the index is 41.1 while in District 4 (Stevensville) the diversity is 23.9.

This past general election there was only one forum for the public which was held in the county seat of Centreville. Traditionally Budget and other hearings are in three parts of the County but that requires long drives in the First District.

This inattention has resulted in a general dissatisfaction that decisions are made "elsewhere". If folks were elected by their own District, the four would each represent between 11-12000 people and be required to be accountable and available to those constituents.

Just a note, a vote for this Bill supports democracy not partisanship. The majority party in Queen Anne's would be unlikely to lose any seats or power in a District elected system, but they would be required to face and support solutions to the varied rural and urban issues of distance, access and income of our county.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we urge that a favorable report be made for House Bill 447.