

To: Honorable Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Ways & Means Committee
From: Merle Schwartz, Kent Island resident in Queen Anne's County, Stevensville, MD
RE: **House Bill 447 – Local Elections - County Commissioner - District Voting – Requesting a FAVORABLE REPORT**

Date: February 10, 2023

Please provide a favorable report on House Bill 447!

I live in Queen Anne's County and was a recent candidate for county commissioner in the 2022 election. While I did not win, and I knew that I should only have been representing my own district in our local government. I live in a populated area near the bay, Kent Island. I understand the needs and concerns for development that are unique to my district. In fact, just today I saw a realtor advertising for tenants for new commercial area saying, "Growing residential market with household numbers expected to double within the next 18 months." We have a lot of voters here that skew fair representation for folks that live far to the other end of our county in rural areas. As I listened to the re-elected commissioners, and read their meeting notes, I see that they often vote all the same and appear to support the needs of the more developed area near the bridge. It's not right.

It is most important the people feel represented by their elected officials. For this to happen, we need in-district representation and district-based voting. The more our residents can feel heard, the more people will turn out to vote that are a true representation of our county's populated, rural and economic diversity. That is fair representation. If that means that our county commissioner meetings show votes that are not always aligned, then we will know that real conversations are happening at the government level that represent the unique needs of each of the 4 districts.

I support HB447 and I am asking you to do the right thing and provide a favorable report.

Thank you for listening,

Dr. Merle J. Schwartz