

February 10, 2023

To Chair, Vice-Chair, and House Ways and Means Committee Members,

I am writing today to respectfully request your support of HB447. As you know, this bill would require county commissioners to be elected by a plurality of the vote in their own districts, rather than the current system in some Maryland counties. Currently, Queen Anne's County (QAC), my county of residence, all county commissioners are elected at-large.

The current process for electing county commissioners in QAC is antithetical democracy and does not enable equal representation of voters in the districts having less residents than my own densely populated District-1 Kent Island. Under the current election process, Kent Island voters can unfairly override the vote of voters of the less populated Districts (D) 1, 2, and 3. Constituents in D-1, 2, 3 do not stand of chance of having their votes having an impact because District 4 has the plurality of voters. For example, the vote of a Sudlersville resident (D-1) does not have the same weight as the vote of a densely populated D-4.

In addition, the current system does not provide accountability. The voter of each district should elect its own county commissioner who will be attentive the issues of that voter's own district. For example, voting to upgrade trails on D-4 might have the impact of depriving D-1 of budget to support an equally important project for D-1. Another example is that D-1 has no public library or dog park. Why is that? Our county commissioners need to be voted in by and held accountable to the residents of their own district. It is the densely populated D-4 that has the attention of the county commissioners because that is where the majority of the voters reside.

Lastly, when voters think their voices matter, they will vote. The current system of electing five at-large commissioners with one district having the plurality of the vote is discouraging to voters in the other four districts.

As QAC D-4 resident (I live in the district with the most QAC voters), I strongly support HB477 and respectfully request a favorable report out on this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Crystal Woodward
Stevensville, MD