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Re HB 477

I am opposed to this legislation. I am former St. Mary's County Commissioner and Commissioner President and can attest to the fact that the current system worked well for the county citizens during my 8 years in office. Citizens had the option of either contacting any commissioner with a concern, or all five commissioners. Board of Commissioner members represented all citizens, not just those in their commissioner district.

Currently the commissioner districts have approximately the same number of people based on the latest census and provide a geographically defined pool for potential candidates who must reside in the district, with the exception of the Board President. This ensures that candidates have knowledge of their district, but because the current system requires a candidate to run county-wide, they gain valuable insights to all area of the county. This in turn allows for better representation.

In my experience, people wishing to bring an issue to the attention of the Board of Commissioners might approach any commissioner who they felt more comfortable with, or who had a particular interest in the issue. Or they would address the issue to the entire Board for action. I think this served the citizens well.

The 2020 Census has St. Mary's County's population at 114,687. Given the size of the population I do not see the need for the change proposed by this bill.

In the recent past both Charter Government and Code Home Rule have been rejected by the voters. If enacted, HB 477 should at least require the change for St. Mary's County to be put to voter referendum.