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Testimony in SUPPORT of SB517: Amendments Convention Called Under Article V of the U.S. Constitution – Delegation to the Convention

Dear Committee Chair Brian Feldman, and the Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Seth Lipko, from District 32. I support this common sense bill. This bill provides a thoughtful framework for Maryland's participation in an amendments convention called under Article V of the U.S. Constitution. ensuring our state is prepared to engage responsibly *when* such a historic event occurs.

In brief, Article V empowers states to propose constitutional amendments when Congress fails to act, requiring applications from two-thirds of the states to call a convention. While many interstate conventions have been called in our nation's history, there has not yet been one called under Article V.

Any attentive citizen will quickly realize that both the executive and legislative branches of our federal government are too dysfunctional to solve the difficult and important problems we face as a country. An Article V convention of states is inevitable. In fact, one particular movement has 20 of the 34 necessary states on board to “trigger” a convention. We must be prepared for it. You must be prepared for it. Enter SB517.

This proactive bill protects Maryland's interests by establishing clear qualifications for commissioners: they must be U.S. citizens and state residents for at least five years, registered voters over 25, and free from recent federal lobbying or employment ties, ensuring their loyalty is to Maryland and not outside influences.

Additionally, commissioners must swear an oath to uphold specific duties, including voting as a unified delegation and adhering to instructions from the General Assembly. They are prohibited from supporting amendments that erode the Bill of Rights or individual liberties.

This bill also establishes an advisory committee comprised of a bipartisan slate of state legislators, who will monitor, advise, and even recall delegates who exceed their authority. This oversight mechanism addresses common fears about conventions spiraling out of control.

Whether Maryland itself holds Article V applications or not, once 34 states agree to meet on a particular topic, all 50 states will be invited. When this happens, I want to be proud that our state is ready to rise to the occasion and show that we care enough about our nation to be ready to solve the problems that Congress will not. I urge you to support the full passage of this bill. Thank you.