

February 9, 2026

HB 565 County Boards of Education – Elections – District Voting

Government, Labor and Elections Committee

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Esteemed members of the House Government, Labor and Elections Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 565, County Boards of Education – Elections – District Voting.

The area of my concern lies in the practice across several counties in the Southern Maryland region of at-large (county-wide) voting for district seats. In St Mary's County, where I live and raise my family, the elected offices of the school board and county commissioners are all voted on at-large even though there are four districts in which the candidates must live. This is vote dilution pure and simple. Voters should have the ability to directly pick their own representation. In St. Mary's County in particular, there are definitely one and maybe two districts that would likely elect a different candidate if only the votes from that district counted. These two districts have a much higher percentage of people of color and of poverty than the county as a whole. With this practice, potential candidates are discouraged from running because they don't think they can win, and this has been proven out with election results. It also discourages voting since voters feel their candidate doesn't have a chance anyway or isn't even on the ballot. Ending the practice of at-large voting for districted offices would be an important step towards fair representation for protected classes.

Therefore, my encouragement to the committee is to amend and improve HB 565 by making school board as well as county commissioner races by district.

Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

Anne Marie Dailey

California, MD (St. Mary's County)

703-517-1978

daileyam@gmail.com