

This Testimony pertains to the opposition of Maryland HB 2100 / SB 2100, “An Act concerning Election Districts – General Assembly and Representatives in Congress”.

My name is William Gallagher, and I am representing myself as a concerned citizen.

To the Honorable Members of the Maryland General Assembly:

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong opposition to the proposed constitutional amendment being considered during the August 2026 special session concerning congressional redistricting standards. This proposal is not a measured reform, a neutral clarification, or a good-government response to legal uncertainty. It is an attempt to change the rules after the courts enforced the rules that already existed.

Marylanders should be deeply troubled that the General Assembly is being called back to Annapolis for the narrow purpose of weakening constitutional guardrails that protect voters from manipulated congressional maps. The 2022 court decision that struck down the 2021 congressional map did so because the map failed basic democratic standards: compactness, contiguity, and due regard for natural and jurisdictional boundaries. Those standards are not obstacles to democracy. They are safeguards for it.

Changing the Constitution to evade accountability is Wrong! The central problem with this proposal is simple: when a court found that Maryland’s prior congressional map violated constitutional principles, the response should have been to respect those principles, not to rewrite them out of the way. If the General Assembly believes that public confidence in elections matters, it should strengthen limits on partisan mapmaking, not seek permission to disregard them.

A constitutional amendment should be reserved for protecting the rights of the people, not expanding the power of politicians. This measure would do the opposite. It would make it easier for those already in power to draw districts for political advantage and then ask voters to accept that as a legitimate democratic process.

Midcycle redistricting undermines stability and trust. Congressional districts are traditionally redrawn after the census so that representation can reflect population changes. Midcycle redistricting, especially when undertaken for openly political reasons, breaks that expectation. It tells voters that their district lines are temporary, their communities are negotiable, and their representation can be reshaped whenever political leaders believe it is advantageous. That is not democratic accountability. It is political gamesmanship. Maryland should not respond to gerrymandering elsewhere by embracing the same abuse here. A race to the bottom does not become principled simply because another state started running first.

Voters deserve fair representation, not predetermined outcomes. The purpose of redistricting should be to ensure that voters choose their representatives. It should never be to help representatives choose their voters. Any proposal that clears a path for drawing Maryland's eight congressional districts to achieve a preferred partisan outcome deserves rejection, regardless of which party benefits. Maryland voters include Democrats, Republicans, independents, and citizens who reject partisan labels altogether. They live in counties, municipalities, neighborhoods, shore communities, suburbs, and cities with distinct interests. District lines should respect those communities, not slice them apart to manufacture safer seats or eliminate dissenting voices.

The Special Session's narrow scope makes the problem worse. The decision to limit the special session only to redistricting standards makes this proposal even more objectionable. Maryland families are facing real pressures: affordability, taxes, energy costs, public safety concerns, transportation needs, and the rising cost of daily life. Yet the General Assembly is being asked to set those issues aside and focus exclusively on changing the rules for political mapmaking. That sends the wrong message. It suggests that preserving or expanding political power is more urgent than addressing the practical concerns of Maryland residents. Public trust is not built by narrowing debate, rushing constitutional changes, and excluding other priorities from consideration.

Maryland should lead with fair maps, not partisan retaliation. If lawmakers are serious about protecting voting rights and fair representation, they should pursue an independent, transparent, and nonpartisan redistricting process. They should adopt standards that apply consistently, prevent extreme partisan manipulation, respect communities of interest, and preserve meaningful judicial review. Instead, this amendment appears designed to remove a legal barrier that previously stopped an unconstitutional map. That is precisely the wrong lesson to draw from the 2022 litigation. The lesson should be that constitutional limits matter and that courts must be able to enforce them when the political branches overreach.

In conclusion, I urge the General Assembly to reject this proposed constitutional amendment. Do not weaken constitutional standards because they proved inconvenient. Do not normalize midcycle redistricting for partisan advantage. Do not ask Marylanders to bless a process that undermines the very fairness it claims to protect. Maryland should stand for fair maps, stable representation, competitive elections, and voters' right to choose their representatives. For those reasons, I respectfully but firmly oppose this measure.