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Appropriations Committee
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Written Testimony for HB 1178 – Municipalities – Annexation – Limitations

February 26, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr and members of the Government, Labor and Elections Committee. I am Delegate Andrea Harrison seeking your support for HB 1178 which provides limitations to the annexation of property by Municipalities.

Annexation serves as a vital mechanism for municipalities to adapt to growth and enhance tax revenue. However, when these changes cross the boundaries of legislative districts, they jeopardize the fundamental principles of equitable representation. The implications of municipal annexation across legislative districts also directly impacts the lives of countless citizens who deserve clear and effective representation.

When annexation crosses legislative districts and it is not during the decennial census, it undermines the essential relationship between constituents and their elected representatives. Further, it will lead to unequal population distribution. It creates a landscape where communities may be fragmented among multiple legislators, causing confusion and frustration about whom to turn to for advocacy and support. This dilution of representation can significantly weaken community voices and may result in unequal service provision. The fragmentation of representation may complicate negotiations and decision-making processes regarding essential funding and support for newly annexed regions. Such complexities can lead to conflicts and delays, ultimately stunting the growth and development of some areas and overgrowth of others, sometimes within the same community or that of the immediate adjacent community.

The rich tapestry of our communities is woven from shared values, history, and social connections. When annexation disrupts these established identities by linking residents to unfamiliar locales, it can foster disconnection and alienation. Preserving community identity is paramount to building strong, resilient neighborhoods.

To safeguard the interests of our communities and ensure fair representation, I strongly advocate for the implementation of clear limitations on municipal annexation across legislative districts.

These measures should include:

- Establish strict criteria that require any annexation to align with existing legislative boundaries, protecting the cohesive representation of residents, at least until the decennial census.
- Prohibit annexation across legislative districts without the consent of the legislative delegation of the proposed annexed locale.

- Prohibit annexation of land owned by United States of America, a political sub-division, department, agency, or bi-county commission of the State of Maryland without the consent of the respective entity.
- Prohibit the annexation of property owned by a tax-exempt religious entity without the consent of the respective entity.
- Insist on processes of thorough community involvement, such as public hearings and consultations, transparent and comprehensive planning that thoughtfully considers the implications of annexation thus ensuring that all stakeholders have an equitable say.

As I conclude, let me emphasize that addressing the challenge of annexation across legislative districts is not merely an administrative task; it's a moral imperative. We must uphold the integrity of our communities and ensure that every citizen has a meaningful voice in their representation. By enacting thoughtful limitations, we can foster stronger, unified communities that honor residents' identities while ensuring equitable services and representation. Remember, not everyone wants to live or own property within a municipality. Those individuals who have purchased property made a conscious decision on where they wanted to live or own property.

I am requesting a favorable report of HB 1178. Thank you for your attention and consideration.