



**Regarding House Bill 350 – Favorable  
Submitted by Birgit Sharp, 2/9/2026**

CANDLE\* strongly urges this committee to pass HB350.

At-large elections and unfair district maps deny many communities the ability to elect representatives who truly reflect their needs. These structures dilute community voices and concentrate political power in ways that exclude people from meaningful representation. Black and brown communities bear the brunt of this exclusion.

At this moment in our country, the stakes could not be higher. Federal actions have directly targeted communities of color. The Trump Administration has dismantled DEI offices and eliminated grants and contracts that supported equity-focused work. As a result, critical research into health conditions that disproportionately affect people of color has been cancelled. Programs addressing air pollution in frontline communities, maternal health for Black women, language access for immigrant families, and many other essential services have been terminated.

Meanwhile, federal civil rights enforcement has been frozen—weakening protections in voting, policing, housing, education and employment. AND ICE enforcement has intensified in communities of color, now operating with implicit permission to racially profile.

In this environment, fair and representative local government is not a luxury—it's a necessity. Communities that are already under attack must have elected leaders who understand their realities and are accountable to them.

HB350 is a concrete step toward justice. It gives historically marginalized communities a real opportunity for meaningful political participation. It helps ensure that these communities can finally elect leaders who will fight for their health, safety, rights, and dignity.

For these reasons, we strongly urge a favorable report on HB350.

\*CANDLE is the Community Action Network for Democracy, Liberties and Equality, based in Anne Arundel and Calvert counties. Our membership is close to 150 people.

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*Far better to light the candle, than to curse the darkness.*