

February 11, 2026

HB0565, the Fair Representation Act, as a resident of Calvert County

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Position: **Favorable**

House Government, Labor, and Elections, Chair and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate having the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB0565, the Fair Representation Act. As a long-time resident of Calvert County, I write to express my strong and unequivocal support for HB 565: Fair Representation Voting, and to respectfully urge a favorable report on this essential legislation.

The 2026 Maryland Voting Rights Act campaign seeks to enact robust protections against voter intimidation, suppression, and discriminatory vote dilution. HB 565 stands as a vital component of that effort. While Maryland is rightfully recognized for having some of the most progressive voting laws in the nation, serious gaps remain in our local election structures that enable voter suppression and discrimination, particularly through at-large voting systems. HB 565 directly addresses this gap by reinforcing the principle of district-based voting for local offices.

The federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 remains our nation's most effective tool for combating discriminatory voting practices. Yet it is only as strong as the states and localities that uphold its spirit and intent. Therefore, Maryland legislators have both the authority and the responsibility to safeguard fair and equitable voting in our local jurisdictions, including Calvert County and similarly situated counties across the state. Currently, under the existing system, I can vote for all seats, even those outside my district. This means that individuals who have never set foot in my neighborhood can effectively decide who represents me. This situation is unacceptable, as it dilutes my district's voice and weakens the connection between elected officials and the people they are meant to serve. This existing way of voting in Calvert County for its County Commissioners and Board of Education is a deeply flawed system.

This structure fundamentally undermines the principle of district representation. It enables voters living outside a district to decide who represents that district, even when their interests and experiences differ significantly from those of the actual residents. This practice is not merely problematic; it is fundamentally inequitable. The opinions of a district's residents can be overridden by voters who do not share their community's concerns or priorities. When a community's preferred candidates are consistently out voted by the broader county electorate, the predictable result is a governing body that fails

to reflect the diversity, priorities, and perspectives of all the people it serves. District-based voting, by contrast, strengthens representation, enhances accountability, and builds genuine trust between elected officials and the residents who depend on them to address local concerns. As a longtime resident, I care deeply about the health of our democracy at the federal, state, and local levels. I want my neighbors and I to have confidence that when we vote for our County Commissioners or Board of Education representative, our voices will not be diluted or overridden by voters residing outside our district. HB 565 offers a straightforward, common-sense remedy to this longstanding problem.

I also want to commend Delegate Long for introducing and championing this legislation. It takes both courage and foresight to challenge entrenched systems that may be familiar but are demonstrably unfair. HB 565 is not about partisan advantage; it is about ensuring that every community in Maryland has a fair opportunity to elect candidates who understand their needs and are directly answerable to them.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable vote on HB 565: Fair Representation Voting, and to take this critical step toward making our local elections more just, more representative, and more reflective of the values Marylanders hold dear.

Thank you for your time and consideration. And most importantly, your service to the great people of Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,
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