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House Bill HB0350, the Voting Rights Act

Position: FAVORABLE

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To the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

I'm Sean Brimm, a member of Cecil County's Democratic Central Committee as well as a fourth-generation resident of Cecil County.

Since the ratification of Cecil County's Charter government in 2010, no Independent or Democratic Party candidate has been able to win a seat on the Cecil County Council. The Charter's "at-large" voting clause has been an obstacle to minority representation and opposition party representation. One hundred percent of races since 2010 have been won by Republicans, who are only 45% of the County-wide electorate.

For the last five years, I have worked to bring this matter to the attention of my colleagues and of the voters and residents of Cecil County. I wish to thank especially the efforts of Michelle Ravert, a former Democratic candidate for a seat on the County Council. She has been spearheading a voter referendum effort to bring the issue before the public. She is irreplaceable.

In 2024, the Cecil County Charter Review Committee, consisting of appointees of the Republican Chief Executive, recommended repealing the at-large voting clause. Unfortunately, neither the Chief Executive nor the County Council acted on this recommendation, and unlike other Charter amendments, this one was not discussed at all publicly, much less submitted to the voters for approval.

Indeed, the Council several months ago sent a letter to Ms. Ravert signed by all Cecil County Council members, that they would not consider the matter in any way, and provided no real explanation at all. Delegate Hornberger submitted HB0815 last week to explicitly change the Cecil County Charter to abolish at-large voting. Mr. Hornberger is to be commended for adding his voice to the discussion.

I wish to also give a shout-out to Mr. Roland Patterson of the Baltimore County NAACP. Mr. Patterson mentioned Cecil County and Wicomico County and our voter rights plight by name in testimony several weeks ago in the Senate on SB0255.

Cecil County has not had a functioning democracy in 16 years. Because justice delayed is justice denied, I strongly urge the House to pass this historic legislation without delay.

Thank you for your consideration.