



TESTIMONY TO THE GOVERNMENT, LABOR AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

HB 565 County Boards of Education - Elections - District Voting (Fair Representation Act)

Position: Favorable

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

Date: February 11, 2026

The League of Women Voters supports districting standards that not only protect the right of all citizens to vote but also encourage all citizens to vote. To that end, we support standards that promote fair and effective representation at all levels of government with maximum opportunity for public participation.

As the law currently stands, six Maryland counties are divided into Board of Education election districts: Calvert, Cecil, Garrett, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, and St. Mary's County - yet the members of those districts are voted on by all county voters. This can, and has, resulted in voters being represented by Board of Education members who were elected by a minority of voters from their particular district. This is unfair and ineffective representation and discourages voter engagement both in the voting process and with their representative on the School Board.

This legislation still allows for some Board members to continue to be elected at-large, meaning that they can be elected by all voters in the county. But it also requires that members elected to represent districts be elected with a plurality of votes cast by those who live in that district. For those counties that require the candidate to live in the district they are running to represent them, this maintains that requirement. This was not specified in the bill for all the impacted counties and might be something to consider.

We are all aware of apathy on the part of many voters because they believe their vote will not matter, which can be true if the votes of people who don't live in that district overwhelm the votes of those who actually live there. Therefore, we strongly support HB 566 and urge a favorable report.