

TESTIMONY HB488

TO: Rules and Executive Nominations Committee
Chair Anne Healy and members of the Committee

Position: Opposed

Dear Delegates,

Many Republican lawmakers have already argued that the proposed maps are designed to eliminate the state's only GOP-held congressional seat. This mid-cycle gerrymandering disproportionately benefits one party, undermines the legitimacy of the process and erodes public trust, not to mention disenfranchising approximately 1/3 of the State's voters. This proposal appears to be highly partisan and risks being struck down in court. Courts have already struck down Maryland maps in the past, and pushing through another aggressive re-draw could lead to costly litigation and further instability. Wasting even more public money on court battles when Maryland already has an outrageous deficit just doesn't make sense. This push to eliminate the only Republican representative in Congress is nothing more than a partisan power grab.

Even leaders within the majority party warn the effort is dangerous. Senate President Bill Ferguson doesn't even want to push forward with HB488. When leaders in their own party oppose the plan, it becomes obvious that the proposal is a pure partisan effort to control Maryland. Maryland currently has eight congressional seats, with only one currently held by a Republican. With 31.5% of Maryland voters registered as Republican, Maryland should have at least 2 and possibly 3 members in Congress. Yet, Democrats seek to eliminate the one Republican member currently in office. Is that fair?

No public input was allowed to the commission meetings. The redistricting commission voted behind closed doors to advance a map of their choosing. Such secrecy in map-drawing undermines public confidence and contradicts the principles of transparency in governance.

Advancing this proposal despite public opposition demonstrates total disregard for constituent concerns about fairness. The Maryland constitution states that districts should be – concise, compact and contiguous areas nearly equal populations – (crossing the Chesapeake Bay is hardly contiguous or compact!), using natural boundaries, maintaining county boundaries – all of which make sense! **How about creating districts that allow voters to chose their elected officials rather than politicians that choose their voters.**

In conclusion, the redistricting push outlined in HB 488 will certainly end up in court – wasting more tax-payer money, is seen as highly partisan, secretive, publicly very unpopular, and contradicts Maryland's Constitutional guidelines. The Governor and commission should abandon this effort entirely.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne White
1913 Martins Cove Court, Annapolis, MD 21409