



NAACP

Howard County Branch

#7020

Support of HB 488

Willie Flowers- President; NAACP Howard County Branch #7020

Committee: House Rules and Executive Nominations

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chairman Wilson and members of the Committee. My name is Willie Flowers and I am here representing the NAACP Howard County Branch.

For over a century, the NAACP has fought to ensure that every Black Marylander and every person of color has a seat at the table of democracy. We stand today in **strong support of House Bill 488**. Redistricting is not merely a technical exercise in drawing lines; it is the fundamental process by which we determine whether marginalized communities will have a meaningful voice in the halls of Congress or whether that voice will be systematically muted.

The NAACP supports the Governor's plan because it prioritizes the protection of 'communities of interest'—the neighborhoods and families who share history, economic challenges and social goals. This historic plan balances national representation and adjusts to the times.

HB 488 works to move in the right direction. By following the recommendations of a commission that engaged in historic levels of public outreach, this bill ensures that our congressional districts reflect the demographic reality of modern Maryland. It protects the integrity of minority-opportunity districts, ensuring that the voters of color who drive our state's economy and culture are not sidelined by outdated or exclusionary boundaries.

We also recognize the broader context. Across the nation, we are witnessing a coordinated assault on the Voting Rights Act. When other states move to suppress minority voices through mid-cycle redistricting, Maryland has a moral and civic obligation to respond by strengthening its own representative fairness.

Furthermore, we specifically applaud the provision in HB 488 that grants original jurisdiction to the Supreme Court of Maryland. For our members, 'justice delayed is justice denied.' Providing a clear, expedited legal pathway to review these maps ensures that any concerns regarding civil rights can be addressed by our highest state court before a single ballot is cast.

Democracy is strongest when it is inclusive. HB 488 is a step toward a more inclusive Maryland where the 'will of the people' is not just a slogan, but a lived reality for every citizen, regardless of their zip code or background.

On behalf of the NAACP Howard County, we urge this committee to protect the progress we have made and to issue a **favorable report** on House Bill 488. Thank you.