

House Bill 488

Members of the General Assembly, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Power is often defined as the ability to influence outcomes and shape the course of events. But how power is used is what defines leadership.

I'm here because I believe the people in this room care deeply about democracy, fairness, and public trust. I believe you entered public service not simply to win, but to build something that lasts.

Redistricting is not just a political decision. It's a statement about our values. It tells the public whether democracy is something we protect—or something we manipulate when it becomes inconvenient.

Maryland has long prided itself on being a leader—not just in policy outcomes, but in democratic standards. Leadership means raising the bar, even when we have the power to lower it.

Fair representation isn't only about who wins today. It's about whether communities feel heard rather than engineered, whether voters feel confidence rather than cynicism, and whether our institutions remain worthy of trust.

Short-term victories that undermine democratic legitimacy ultimately weaken the very causes we care about most. If we justify this now, we normalize it for the future—and eventually lose the moral authority to object when others do the same.

You don't need to change the map to govern effectively. You don't need to eliminate competition to serve well. And you don't need to sacrifice trust to move Maryland forward.

I'm asking you to lead with restraint as well as conviction—to protect not just political advantage, but democratic integrity.

Please vote against House Bill 488.

Please don't ask future generations to fix what we had the power—and the responsibility—to protect today.

Thank you for your time and your service.

William Wood