

Dear Members of the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee,

This testimony is being submitted in collaboration with other members of my community in Baltimore City and is urging the Committee to move forward immediately with the proposed congressional map, and to pass congressional districts for 2026, 2028, and 2030. I live in District 46 in Baltimore's Southeast Side and grew up in the Maryland's rural eastern shore that has been packed for Republicans under the current gerrymandered maps. **I am testifying in support of HB488.**

The map before you is the product of months of public engagement through the Governor's Redistricting Advisory Commission. It incorporates extensive public feedback and reflects thoughtful attention to Maryland's communities, Baltimore City, the Capital Region, and fast-growing economic corridors. The Commission has done its work; now the remaining responsibility and courage to act in defense of Democracy rests with the General Assembly.

Maryland is at a critical moment. Across the country, Republican-led states are aggressively redrawing congressional maps at the urging of the executive regime to entrench power before voters can hold them accountable for their violence, lawlessness, and corruption. This is already happening in Texas, Florida, Missouri, Ohio, North Carolina, and others. Every month of delay benefits those efforts. Maryland waiting does not preserve balance, it weakens our ability to respond. In game theory, the only rational response to a repeated game of Prisoner's Dilemma where one side defects is to hit back, and signal that you will continue to do so until compliance is restored. I have long advocated against gerrymandering, and do not like disenfranchisement any more than the members of this committee, but an autocracy without gerrymandering is not more democratic than a democratic society that was forced to deploy it in its defense.

Polling shows that 54 percent of Maryland voters support moving forward with a congressional redistricting, and 68% of Democratic primary voters strongly favor new maps. That is a clear mandate. Voters are asking for action, not delay. In this risk-sensitive election year, it must be clear to all of our representatives that the greater risk is in doing too little, not in doing too much.

Passing maps legislatively for 2026, 2028, and 2030 is the most responsible path forward. Voters deserve stability and clarity for the rest of the decade, not repeated fights and shifting rules every election cycle. Punting this decision to a ballot measure would only create confusion and delay urgently needed action.

This process is lawful, transparent, and necessary. Standing still while others rig the system is not safer- it is indefensible.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in support of HB488.

Sincerely,

John Preston Ford

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