

Dear Chair Delegate Anne Healey, Vice Chair Delegate Marvin E. Holmes, Jr., and Members of the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee,

I am writing to urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 488, the mid-cycle congressional redistricting proposal. HB488 would fundamentally alter Maryland's congressional districts for the 2026 election and beyond, in a rushed process that risks undermining public trust and fair representation.

First, the decision to pursue mid-decade redistricting invites legal uncertainty and potential litigation that could destabilize our election system. Recent court battles over Maryland's maps showed how disruptive redistricting fights can be; reopening those issues now could once again throw candidates, election officials, and voters into confusion. Even Senate leadership has warned that changing maps mid-cycle, in a murky legal landscape, could backfire and ultimately produce outcomes that are worse for Marylanders.

Second, the process and timing of HB488 raise serious transparency and equity concerns. The bill is being fast-tracked on an accelerated timeline, with hearings scheduled during a significant winter storm that makes both in-person and virtual participation more difficult for many residents. This approach signals that public input is an afterthought, especially for people on the Eastern Shore and in other affected communities who already feel disconnected from Annapolis decision-making.

Third, while proponents argue HB488 is a response to partisan gerrymanders in other states, Maryland should not respond to bad practices elsewhere by doubling down on them here. Using redistricting primarily as a partisan weapon deepens polarization and erodes confidence that district lines are drawn for communities, not politicians. Maryland has an opportunity to model a fair, stable, and predictable process instead of escalating a national "arms race" over maps. Even some Democratic leaders have cautioned that this strategy is politically risky and not in the state's long-term interest.

Fourth, the proposed map appears designed to eliminate Maryland's only Republican-held congressional seat by dramatically reconfiguring the 1st District, reaching it across the Chesapeake Bay and into Anne Arundel and Howard counties. This kind of aggressive reconfiguration feeds the perception of partisan gerrymandering rather than principled reform. Voters regardless of party deserve districts that respect geography, communities of interest, and continuity, not lines drawn primarily to engineer outcomes in Washington, D.C.

For these reasons legal risk, lack of genuine public input, partisan escalation, and the

appearance of intentional gerrymandering I respectfully request that you issue an unfavorable report on HB488. Maryland should prioritize stability, fairness, and a transparent, deliberative process over short-term partisan advantage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary A. Taylor

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