

# WRITTEN TESTIMONY — IN SUPPORT OF HB 482

**Bill:** HB 482 – Legislative and Congressional Redistricting and Apportionment Commission (Fair Districts for Maryland Act)

**Sponsor:** Delegate Buckel

**Committee:** Rules and Executive Nominations

**Position:** Support

**Submitted by:** Michael Phillips – Maryland Resident

**Date:** January 25, 2026

## **Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:**

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of HB 482, the *Fair Districts for Maryland Act*, which would establish an independent and nonpartisan redistricting and apportionment commission for Maryland’s legislative and congressional maps.

For decades, Maryland has been held up nationally as a prime example of extreme partisan gerrymandering. Both political parties have acknowledged this reality, and the courts have repeatedly scrutinized the State’s district maps. Our districts have been drawn to protect incumbents, dilute political minorities, and predetermine electoral outcomes—rather than ensure that voters meaningfully choose their representatives.

HB 482 addresses this longstanding structural problem with a reform that is both practical and constitutionally sound: transferring district-drawing authority to an independent commission with clear rules, transparent procedures, public participation, and an explicit duty to prioritize fairness, compactness, and respect for communities of interest.

This reform is overdue.

## **Key Arguments for Passage**

### **1. Restores Faith in Elections**

Redistricting abuses undermine confidence in democratic legitimacy. Fair and neutral maps strengthen voter trust, participation, and civic engagement.

### **2. Protects Minority Voices and Communities of Interest**

Instead of manipulating district boundaries to fragment or isolate communities for political gain, HB 482 allows citizens with shared interests to remain grouped and represented coherently.

### **3. Encourages Competitive Elections**

Under gerrymandering, Maryland’s elections often produce foregone conclusions. Independent commissions tend to increase competition, elevate candidate quality, and broaden coalition-building.

#### **4. Avoids a Cycle of Legislative Retaliation**

As demographics and power shifts occur, partisan control of map-making invites revenge cycles. A neutral commission ends the arms race.

#### **5. Aligns Maryland With a Growing National Trend**

States as politically diverse as California, Colorado, Michigan, and Arizona have transitioned to independent commissions with measurable improvements in fairness and public trust. This is not a partisan reform—it is a governance reform.

#### **6. Reduces Costly Litigation**

Maps drawn through opaque partisan processes are routinely challenged in court. Independent commissions significantly reduce legal uncertainty and taxpayer expense.

### **A Democratic System Should Not Fear Competition**

When district lines are fair, candidates must persuade, listen, and represent. Currently, many Maryland districts are engineered to be so safe that elections are effectively decided in primaries—or not contested at all. That outcome serves political machines, not the people of Maryland.

### **Conclusion**

HB 482 is a serious and meaningful step toward restoring balance, fairness, transparency, and accountability in our elections. Maryland prides itself on leadership in civic reforms; redistricting should be no exception.

I urge the Committee to give HB 482 a **Favorable Report**.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael Phillips