

## **Written Testimony in Opposition to HB488**

Submitted to: House Rules & Executive Nominations Committee

Position: OPPOSE

Submitted by: Tambrey Pilkerton, St. Mary's County, MD

Date: 1/25/2026

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB488. This bill is not a routine procedural update. It is a mid-cycle restructuring of congressional districts that undermines public trust, weakens transparency, and disregards the communities it claims to represent.

1. 1. HB488 destabilizes the electoral process without any new census data to justify it

Redistricting is meant to occur once per decade, following the census. HB488 would force Maryland into another round of map changes in the middle of the cycle, despite no population shifts requiring it. Mid-cycle redistricting creates voter confusion, administrative strain, unnecessary costs for local election boards, and instability in representation.

2. 2. HB488 removes existing statutory guardrails that protect transparency and fairness

The bill repeals Election Law §§8-702 through 8-709 — the very sections that currently govern procedural timelines, public notice requirements, and standards for map submission and review. Removing these protections without replacing them with stronger, independent standards reduces transparency at the exact moment when Marylanders are demanding more of it.

3. 3. HB488 centralizes power in a way that raises constitutional concerns

The bill allows the General Assembly to grant original jurisdiction to the Supreme Court of Maryland for congressional redistricting challenges. This shift bypasses lower courts, reduces opportunities for evidentiary hearings, limits public visibility, and concentrates power in a single judicial body. Maryland's redistricting history has already been marked by litigation and public distrust. HB488 increases the likelihood of further legal challenges.

4. 4. HB488 is ethically troubling because it violates the purpose of representation

Even when a policy is technically legal, it can still be **deeply immoral**. **HB488 violates three core ethical principles: stability, transparency, and community integrity.**

5. 5. HB488 fractures communities of interest — especially in Southern Maryland

St. Mary's County is a distinct peninsula community with a Navy-driven economy, rural land use, unique transportation constraints, and a cohesive local identity. Grouping St. Mary's with distant, unrelated areas dilutes our voice and contradicts the principle of respecting communities of interest.

6. 6. HB488 misaligns representation for a significant number of Maryland voters

Maryland has roughly 4 million registered voters, and nonpartisan mapping analyses consistently show that 20–30% of voters statewide — between 800,000 and 1.2 million people — are placed in districts that do not reflect their geographic, economic, or cultural communities of interest. In Southern Maryland alone, over 150,000 voters, including all 75,000 voters in St. Mary's County, are grouped with distant, unrelated regions whose priorities, demographics, and infrastructure needs are fundamentally different. HB488 does not correct this problem — it deepens it by enabling mid-cycle changes that further fracture communities and dilute rural representation.

### **Conclusion**

Marylanders deserve a redistricting process that is stable, transparent, and community-centered — not one that removes guardrails, centralizes power, and reshapes districts for political convenience.

I respectfully urge the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on HB488.

Sincerely,

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