

Written Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 488

Submitted by: Josue Sierra

Members of the House of Delegates,

I submit this testimony in strong opposition to House Bill 488.

I do so not simply as a Republican, but as an immigrant who understands—both personally and historically—what happens when those in power decide that certain voices are inconvenient and therefore expendable.

HB 488 is not just a redistricting bill. It is an assertion of raw power. It is the decision by those who currently govern to change the rules mid-stream, compress public input, and manipulate representative boundaries in order to silence political opposition. That may be legal on paper. But history teaches us that legality is not the same as justice.

For communities like mine—Hispanic, immigrant, son of Cuban political exile, descendant of the Roma people, and historically marginalized—this pattern is familiar. Oppression rarely begins with violence. It begins with process. It begins with elites deciding that “efficiency” matters more than participation, that outcomes matter more than consent, and that dissent can be managed rather than heard.

That is what HB 488 represents.

The manner in which this bill has been advanced matters just as much as its substance. Slipping the bill onto the agenda without notice, rewriting hearing rules on the fly, and rushing a vote during a major winter storm—when Marylanders may be physically unable to travel or even access the internet—undermines the legitimacy of this body’s actions. When power is exercised in ways that avoid public scrutiny, it erodes trust not just in this bill, but in democratic governance itself.

This is especially troubling given the bill’s stated effect: eliminating the only remaining Republican congressional representation in Maryland. Regardless of party, no legislature committed to pluralism should view the total political erasure of millions of voters as a moral victory.

Democracy is not merely about winning elections. It is about maintaining systems that allow disagreement without domination. Gerrymandering designed to entrench power is not progressive. It is not equitable. And it is not consistent with the civil-rights tradition many in this chamber rightly claim as their inheritance.

Maryland's history, including its struggles with racial, ethnic, and political indigenous disenfranchisement, should make us more cautious, not less, about wielding power in ways that marginalize dissenting communities. The logic used to justify HB 488 today can be used tomorrow against any group that becomes politically inconvenient.

I urge you to pause. To slow this process. To restore transparent rules. To invite full public participation. And to reject the temptation to use procedural power as a substitute for persuasion.

Democracy survives not because one side wins, but because no side is allowed to rule without restraint.

For those reasons, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 488.

Respectfully submitted,

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