

**TESTIMONY OF REBECCA HAMILTON WILLIAMS
BEFORE THE HOUSE RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE
IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 0488
January 26, 2026**

Chair Heely, Vice-Chair Holmes Jr., and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Rebecca Hamilton Williams and I respectfully submit this testimony in **opposition to House Bill 0488**.

While the stated purpose of HB 0488 is to revise Maryland's congressional and legislative districts for the 2026 election cycle, I urge this Committee to consider significant concerns about the bill's **process, timing, and potential effects on fair representation**.

1. Concerns About Partisanship and Fair Representation

The bill's timing and makeup of the Governor's redistricting commission echo a partisan redistricting effort rather than a nonpartisan readjustment based on objective criteria. Several lawmakers have expressed that moving forward a major redistricting measure as the first order of business during a session strained by other urgent state issues sends the wrong message about priorities, especially when residents are struggling with housing affordability and budget shortfalls. The **redistricting committee itself was not fairly representative of Maryland's electorate**. A process intended to determine how voters are represented should reflect a broad and balanced cross-section of the state's voters. When the composition of the committee lacks that balance, it undermines public confidence that district lines are being drawn with neutrality and the interests of all communities in mind.

2. Insufficient Public Input and Accelerated Timeline

HB 0488 is being moved forward on an expedited schedule that limits meaningful public participation. Public testimony is a critical component of democratic governance. The absence of the committee chair during this portion of the process sends a troubling message to constituents who took time to engage, prepare comments, and participate in good faith. Public testimony was cut off, preventing additional individuals from speaking. By ending testimony prematurely, the process effectively cut off the voices of voters, particularly those who may already face barriers to participation. Decisions of this magnitude demand robust public input, not constrained or abbreviated engagement. Finally, The bill was introduced on

January 23, 2026 and scheduled for hearing just days later — during a period when severe weather may hinder in-person testimony and access to virtual options. Many citizens could be unable to engage with their representatives due to storm-related disruptions in travel, power, or internet service, effectively restricting civic participation in a decision that will shape representation for years.

3. **Risk of Legal Challenges and Uncertainty**

Past redistricting maps in Maryland — including mid-cycle adjustments — have faced legal challenges. Instances where courts struck down or required revisions to earlier maps spotlight the importance of crafting district lines that adhere strictly to constitutional and judicial standards. A rushed process increases the risk of map configurations that could again be subject to litigation, consuming legislative time and public resources.

Taken together, these issues suggest a process that prioritized speed over inclusion and outcome over participation. Redistricting should be conducted with the highest standards of openness, fairness, and respect for voter input. HB 0488, as advanced, falls short of those standards. For these reasons, I respectfully urge Members of this Committee to **vote unfavorable on HB 0488** and to support a more deliberative, transparent redistricting process that safeguards public involvement and equitable representation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Hamilton Williams
Elkton, MD (Cecil County)