

**Testimony For HB488: Election Districts- General Assembly and Representatives**

**Support FAV with Amendments**

**To the Rules and Executive Nominations**

**Greetings**

My name is Robert Alex Stubblefield and I am a poet, lay minister, activist-organizer as well as a lifelong Maryland resident. I am writing in support of HB488-Election Districts-General Assembly and Representatives in Congress. My reasons are explained below.

I understand why this bill was created. Considering the tactics being undertaken in states such as Texas, Florida, Arkansas among others, it is designed to help perpetuate the perpetual slide to what we're seeing now. I understand that the way the Maryland Congressional Delegation as it is now has one very far-right Republican who has caused much drama and has been very combative against DC Statehood, anti-immigration and currently supportive of the harm going on right now despite representing a district that ranks low in almost every category. There needs to be a way to ensure that the balance of Congress remains so that people can have a bit of a fighting chance.

Be that as it may, there are concerns as to why an amendment is necessary. For starters, we are a majority Democrat state in which Dems outnumber Republicans 2-1. Despite that leverage, Dems have helped perpetuate some of the harms in the state and in Congress most notably funding the prison industrial complex, tax giveaways to developers and bankers, unfettered growth of data centers which threaten our environmental justice goals among others. That is not a true democracy and it also continues the silence of third and independent candidates. In other words, both are two wings of the same bird. Additionally, the Supreme Court of Maryland as it is right now is a minority appointed panel of judges, which means that all but two of the current Maryland Supreme Court judges were appointed by a Republican. We need to be very careful on whoever has the final say on the redistricting maps as well as a strong checks and balances system can collectively say based on the reported numbers of those who vote.

Bottom line, redistricting while necessary needs to have an amendment in which there is an independent monitor or body that can review the maps to see if equity is maintained as well as include the voices of third and independent parties.