



**PRINCETON  
GERRYMANDERING  
PROJECT**

Fixing bugs in democracy

March 12, 2020

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones  
H-101, State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Speaker Jones and President Ferguson:

We are leaders of nonpartisan democracy-reform organizations working to improve the redistricting processes in our states, and we are calling on Maryland's leadership in the democracy space to help us achieve these reforms. We have seen how Maryland has been able to serve as a vanguard for many democracy-enhancing ideas which have helped pave the way for progress in other states. Similarly, Maryland's passage of redistricting criteria found in the Fair Maps Act (HB1431/SB967) can represent a step towards fairer districts in states like ours with notorious gerrymanders.

The Fair Maps Act would put in place fair redistricting standards that protect communities across the state and is a simple step toward improving the line-drawing process in Maryland. Line-drawing standards like this have broad bipartisan support in the General Assembly with over 65 legislators sponsoring some form of redistricting criteria. If the Old Line State takes the lead on this issue, other state legislatures like ours would no longer be able to use Maryland as an excuse for their inaction.

Currently, North Carolina and Pennsylvania have several redistricting reform bills before our legislatures. In addition, Texas groups are organizing voters to testify in front of redistricting committees, and Indianans will soon do the same. But these efforts are weakened by the visible lack of action in places like Maryland. Critics may ask, why should our state change, if a state like Maryland is not willing to do the same? However, by taking the small step forward of applying stronger standards to the redistricting process, Maryland will position itself as a reform-minded legislature which places the will of the people first. Maryland can show voters around the country that politicians in power value the integrity of our democratic institutions, aiding reform in Indiana, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, and elsewhere.

Indianans, North Carolinians, Pennsylvanians, and Texans want to end gerrymandering, but, like Maryland, we do not have a citizen-led ballot initiative process. Continued inaction on democracy-

enhancing legislation further increases public distrust in the country's political processes, making it harder for elected officials to serve their electorate fully and effectively. Inaction also makes it harder to realize the full value of other reforms that expand ballot access. Citizens living in gerrymandered districts feel as though their votes have no power anyway, so they stay home on Election Day rather than exercise their right to the franchise.

As the new generation of leadership in Maryland, you have an opportunity to guide, not only your state, but also ours towards a new era of fairness and equity in elections. Please take hold of this opportunity now by passing the Fair Maps Act to implement fair redistricting standards, not just for the sake of reform in Maryland but also for fair districting movements like ours.

Sincerely,

League of Women Voters of Indiana  
Common Cause Indiana  
League of Women Voters of North Carolina  
Common Cause North Carolina  
Concerned Citizens for Democracy (Pennsylvania)  
League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania  
Fair Districts PA  
Clean Elections Texas  
Common Cause Texas  
Texans Against Gerrymandering  
Texas Progressive Action Network  
Princeton Gerrymandering Project

CC:

Delegate Anne Healey, Chair of the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee  
Delegate Marvin E. Holmes, Jr., Vice-Chair of the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee  
Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice-Chair of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
League of Women Voters of Maryland  
Common Cause Maryland