



Maryland

**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL  
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**SB 204 Potomac Compact for Fair Representation**

**POSITION: Support with Amendments**

**DATE: February 5, 2020**

We support a state redistricting process and standards that promote fair and effective representation in the state legislature and United States Congress with maximum opportunity for public scrutiny. To ensure a process that is fair and far removed from political bias, we prefer employing an independent citizens' commission as the redistricting body. The membership of this commission should be multi-partisan, including unaffiliated voters, geographically representative, not include any current state elected official, and represent the diversity of the state of Maryland.

We commend this bill for its promotion of standards for Congressional district lines, public hearings, and a commission of professionals dedicated to nonpartisan research and analysis. We appreciate the effort of this bill to ensure that the commission members will be experts in fields that will bolster their abilities to analyze and produce fair maps.

SB 204 takes effect only if the Commonwealth of Virginia adopts a substantially similar process by January 1, 2021. If the Commonwealth of Virginia does not do so by January 1, 2021, the bill does not take effect. We would prefer that Maryland be a leader in redistricting reform and enact a process free from consideration of what other states are doing. However, if we are working toward a compact in reform, this bill should take into account the progress made already in Virginia to pass a constitutional amendment to improve redistricting standards and create a commission that gives citizens a seat at the table. We've attached an infographic which explains the commission process and makeup passed by the 2019 Virginia legislature and which is close to passage for a second time before the 2020 Virginia legislature.

We would urge an amendment to this bill that would also enable the commission process and structure outlined for Maryland to be enacted if Virginia enacts the reform it is currently on track to pass for a second time.

We urge a favorable report with amendments on SB 204.