

Tame the Gerrymander



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TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

HB 477 Potomac Compact for Fair Representation

POSITION: Support with Amendments

BY: The Tame the Gerrymander Coalition

DATE: February 26, 2018

The Tame the Gerrymander Coalition, made up of the League of Women Voters of Maryland, Common Cause Maryland, Represent.Maryland, and Gerrymandered.org, is a coalition dedicated to establishing a fair and open process for drawing election districts in Maryland. We believe that Maryland should lead in the promotion of democratic values for all of its citizens by adopting a redistricting process that gives every Maryland citizen an equal voice in electing their representatives.

We commend this bill which promotes, standards for Congressional district lines, a transparent process with opportunity for public feedback, and a multi-partisan commission selected by an application process overseen by a nonpartisan state-agency.

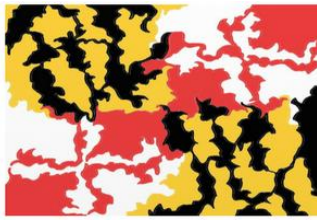
In order to fully support this plan, we would like to see some clarity added to the language about who may, or may not serve on the commission, and whether these limitations would be in place for the full term of the commissioner. Further, we would like to see specificity on who will be selecting the commissioners in Maryland, and the approval process for the maps produced.

With regard to the proposal for multi-seat Congressional districts, we think the issue requires further study, or the production of evidence showing that this change would improve the quality of representation provided to Maryland citizens. More importantly, however, waiting for Congress to approve such a change, would very likely stall redistricting reform for an interminably long time.

Further, Tame the Gerrymander thinks that Maryland need not wait for another state to act to make this move toward fair and equitable representation of its own citizens. However, if we were to support a compact solution, we would like to see meaningful outreach to a compacting state by Maryland legislators that has resulted in measurable progress toward the achievement of reform.

With the support 3000+ advocates, Tame the Gerrymander supports the intent of this legislation to make Maryland's redistricting process one that upholds the tenets of

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American democracy, and reinforces the faith of Marylanders in our elections and representatives. With specified amendments, we urge a favorable report.



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