

March 15, 2021

Testimony on HJ 5
United States of America - District of Columbia - Statehood
Rules and Executive Nominations

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HJ 5, which would urge members of the U.S. Congress to enact federal legislation or propose a constitutional amendment granting legislative autonomy and statehood to the District of Columbia.

Currently, the over 700,000 people who live Washington, DC are not afforded the same rights as American citizens who live in the 50 states. They have no voting representation in Congress, no rights of local self-government, and no protection from key Constitutional rights. They are required to fulfill the same obligations as those who live in the 50 states including serving in the military, paying federal taxes, serving on federal juries, and raising money from local taxpayers to pay for government, but are denied a voice in our national government and authority over state and local affairs.

Washingtonians have been treated as second-class citizens by Congress since the city's founding. 'Taxation without representation' is not just a catchphrase from our license plates, it is our reality in the District of Columbia. Residents have been denied a seat at the table of our democracy for far too long, and Maryland should do all it can to end to this longstanding injustice.

The people of Washington, DC need the support of citizens across the country, including here in Maryland, to obtain the rights other Americans take for granted. HJ 5 allows this to be accomplished through a Constitutional amendment, with a simple majority vote in Congress, this is how all the states since the original 13 have been admitted to the union, and also by legislation which is currently before both houses of Congress.

As a neighboring state, HJ 5 provides Maryland with the opportunity to send a national message that the people of Washington, DC deserve full voting representation in the US Congress and an end to Congressional interference in their local government. Statehood would afford them all of those rights.

We urge a favorable report.