



**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

**Testimony for HB 655 – Local Government – County Commissioner Elections – District Voting**  
**Ways and Means Committee**

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Vice Chair, and honorable members of the committee. My name is Brian Crosby and it's an honor to present HB655, entitled Local Government – County Commissioner Elections – District Voting.

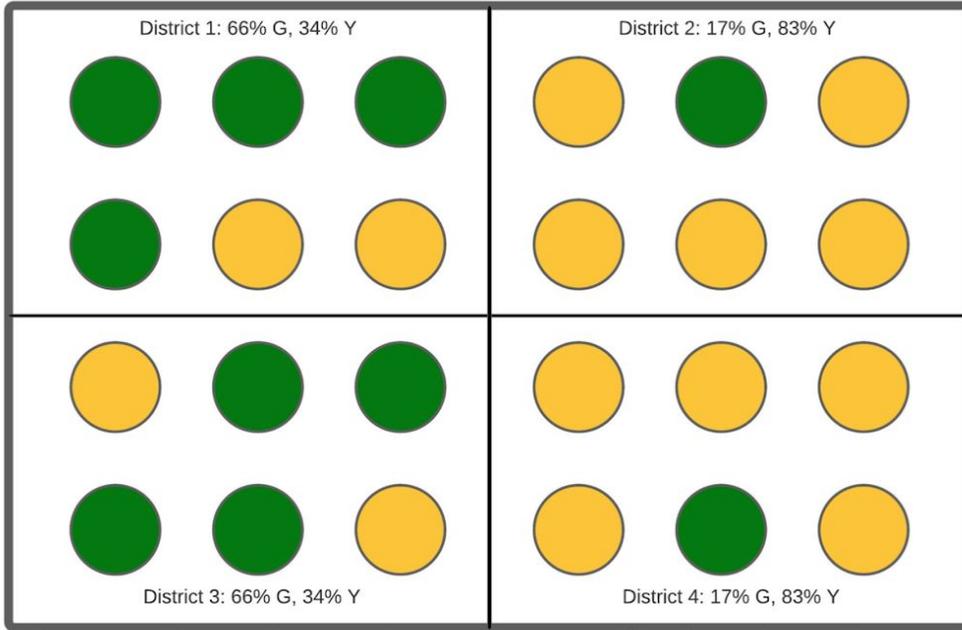
This bill is about fairness, equality, and diversity. It improves democracy at the local level by ending a Jim Crow era policy of electing representatives in a manner that disenfranchises non-white voters. For decades, several counties in Maryland have operated under an at-large voting system for county commissioner elections. Although the county commissioners are required to reside in the district they represent, they are voted for by citizens outside of their district. I believe that the citizens of each county commissioner district have the right to select who represents their interests without influence from voters outside their district.

In my home county, St. Mary's, the Lexington Park and Great Mills area are home to the largest population of non-white voters. This systematic disenfranchisement totally dilutes their electoral voice by adding votes from the rest of the county, and they are left without an advocate for their own community's needs. Basically, if you are a low-income person of color living in Lexington Park or Great Mills, you have generational knowledge that you will not have a voice at the county level. In fact, the system taught you that your vote doesn't matter. Is that what we want to do to citizens in our state?

The dilution of voting power is simply anti-democratic. In fact, according to Section Two of the United States Voting Rights Act of 1965, state and local governments are prohibited from imposing any law that results in discrimination against racial or linguistic minorities. Because this at-large voting essentially silences the votes of the largest community of black and brown people in our county, we are allowing a violation of the Voting Rights Act right here in the great state of Maryland. It's happening under our watch. Our democracy is built on the idea of "one person, one vote," and the current system violates this principle.

Black History Month is a great month to pass a law that ends disenfranchisement of minority voters. Actually, it's a great month to do anything that puts us on a trajectory toward a more fair and equitable future. We, the General Assembly, have the opportunity to make a change before the Justice Department gets involved. Passing this law creates a more representative form of government and is morally the right thing to do. I urge the committee for a favorable ruling report on HB 655.

# HB 655



Despite winning a majority of votes in two separate districts, the at-large voting system will result in 4 Y victories and 0 G victories, instead of a more representative 2 Y and 2 G.

# HB 655

## Vote Totals

Title	Yellow	Green	Current System	Proposed Change
District 1	2	4	Yellow Wins	Green Wins
District 2	5	1	Yellow Wins	Yellow Wins
District 3	2	4	Yellow Wins	Green Wins
District 4	5	1	Yellow Wins	Yellow Wins
<b>Total</b>	<b>14 (58%)</b>	<b>10 (42%)</b>	<b>Yellow 4-0</b>	<b>Yellow 2 - Green 2</b>

\*\*\*Plus the County Commissioner President which makes the board 3-2 (60% Yellow, 40% Green) and more representative of the actual vote totals

