

Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Kara Dudley and I live in District 27C in Calvert County. In our county, we have 3 district specific commissioners, along with two commissioners at-large, who represent Calvert residents. Unfortunately, not all residents are getting fair and equal representation, as the entire county votes for all 5 commissioners. The decision of who represents residents within a district should be solely in the hands of those residents, not folks who live outside the district and whose priorities are guided by outside needs. This system not only disempowers voters, but it discourages qualified candidates from running, which does a disservice to us all.

I firmly believe that all Calvert County residents deserve a voice in our local government and a seat at the table. Currently, that is not the case, but we have the opportunity to right this wrong and ensure the way we choose our local officials aligns with the spirit of the Voting Rights Act, Section 2. I am asking for a favorable report for HB655. Thank you for your time and consideration.