

Opposition to Mayor's Proposed Maps in City Council Bill 23-0428

Isaac Leal

October 5th, 2023

To City Council and the Mayor,

I understand that redistricting is a necessary and important process that needs to be done in order to ensure that people are fairly and appropriately represented. However, I believe that the current proposal of the maps is rather inadequate as it currently stands. Beyond the unusual shapes of some of the districts and the splitting of communities and regions, there are notable issues. To me, there are three key issues that stand out.

Firstly, the significant Latino population in southeastern Baltimore is split between districts 1, 2, and 13. While the population at this time would not necessitate a majority in any district, they would make up a significant fraction, and depending on the configuration of a district, could even be the largest minority group within that district when looking at Voting Age Population. As such, they would have significant and growing political influence if they were combined into one district, and would have a councilperson more attuned and attentive to their wishes and requests.

Additionally, there is a significant Asian population located in and around Johns Hopkins university. While smaller than the current Latino population, they still make up a sizable portion of Baltimore. At the moment, the precincts with substantial Asian populations are split between districts 4, 6, and 14. I would like to see that combined into one district where they would have greater political influence. As well, there is a notable Asian population running from Bolton Hill to Harbor East that is split across a variety of districts. Any district formation should also consider that population as well.

Finally, there was substantial TOD-oriented rezoning near Penn Station. At this time, from my observation, it seems to be split between Districts 7, 11, and 12. Combined with the new Penn Station and the completion of the Frederick Douglass tunnel creating a viable commutershed region within Baltimore to DC, the area is primed for new development. I believe that this should be in as few districts as possible to centralize oversight, questions and comments, and permitting navigation from one councilperson who would have deep knowledge of the area and can identify ideal site locations for sustainable, inclusive development and placemaking.

I hope that the city council can take these comments and suggestions, along with others received, to create an alternative to Mayor Scott's proposal that would more fairly support the needs of all of Baltimore's communities. I hope that incumbents are fairly treated by this process as well and are able to get districts that make sense to them.

Regards,

Isaac Leal