



MARYLAND MATTERS

Redistricting Commission Should Hold Separate Public Hearing For Baltimore, Advocates Say

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Fair elections advocates are calling on the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission to hold a public hearing solely for Baltimore City, warning that the commission's current plan to hold a joint hearing including Anne Arundel and Howard counties could "suppress the voices of Baltimore City residents."

The commission plans to hold an initial round public hearings for a total of eight regions in the coming months before Census redistricting data is released. Although Maryland has eight congressional districts, commissioners have said the list of public hearing regions "in no way represents or correlates with how congressional or legislative districts may be drawn."

The current list includes:

- The Eastern Shore, including Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester counties;
- Northern Maryland, including Carroll, Cecil and Harford counties;
- Southern Maryland, including Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's counties;
- Western Maryland, including Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, and Washington counties;
- Central Maryland, including Anne Arundel, Baltimore City and Howard counties;
- Baltimore County;
- Montgomery County; and
- Prince George's County.

The commission, tasked with drawing both congressional and state legislative districts that Gov. Lawrence J. Hogan Jr. (R) will submit to the General Assembly, is set to kick off its public hearings Wednesday, June 9, with a 6 p.m. virtual hearing focusing on the Eastern Shore.

On Thursday, Common Cause Maryland and the League of Women Voters of Maryland called on the commission to add a separate ninth hearing for Baltimore City.

“The population in Baltimore City is overwhelmingly Black, especially when compared to the other jurisdictions being grouped into the Central Region,” Common Cause Maryland Executive Director Joanne Antoine said in a statement. “The needs in Baltimore City are also not similar to those in the other two jurisdictions.”

Nikki Tyree, state director for the League of Women Voters of Maryland, said in a statement that the proposed central region hearing contains far more voters than any other region proposed for hearings.

“When we look at the approximate populations by region, the Central Region has about 50% more population (1,494,068) than the next largest region, Montgomery County (1,055,110), which isn’t fair or equitable,” Tyree said. “The excuse of Baltimore City’s location should not be hidden behind when determining how its residents’ voices are heard.”

Commission co-Chairs Alexander Williams (D) and Walter Olson (R) said, at an earlier hearing, that although public hearings will be focused on particular regions, anyone will be able to comment.

Commission members said they want to finish their first round of public hearings by the time the Census releases in-depth redistricting data in mid-August. After that data is released, state officials will need to adjust it to comply with Maryland law and have incarcerated people reallocated to their last known address.

Antoine acknowledged that commissioners are up against the clock in terms of drawing maps, but urged the commission to come up with a more “equitable formula for determining regional grouping” to ensure everyone has a voice.

Antoine said she recognizes “time constraints, but the first round of public hearings are critical.”

Hogan created the commission — which includes three Republicans, three Democrats and three members not registered with either of those parties — via an executive order earlier this year.

The maps he proposes will be subject to alteration and approval by the General Assembly.

Marylanders interested in registering and submitting questions for the upcoming Eastern Shore virtual regional hearing can do so at [this link](#).