



CITY OF CHESAPEAKE

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January 16, 2024

Chairwoman King
General Assembly Building, Room 906
201 North 9th Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the City of Chesapeake and its City Council to strongly oppose HB1304 (Convirs-Fowler). This proposed legislation, seeking to transition our election process from voting at large to voting in districts, raises serious concerns about the potential impact on the equitable representation and inclusivity of our community. Chesapeake has long been committed to fostering a democratic process that embraces diversity and ensures the representation of all citizens. Our current practice of voting at large for all members of the city council has been a cornerstone of this commitment, promoting inclusivity and fairness in our local governance.

Voting at large allows residents to cast their votes for all council members, irrespective of district boundaries. This approach is grounded in the belief that every citizen's voice deserves equal weight and consideration in the decision-making process. By maintaining a city-wide perspective, we ensure that the needs and concerns of all communities within Chesapeake are taken into account, rather than potentially isolating certain districts. Switching to a district-based voting system has the potential to fragment our community and undermine the principles of fairness and inclusivity that Chesapeake holds dear. It could lead to a situation where certain districts receive disproportionate attention or resources, leaving others marginalized. The risk of perpetuating disparities in representation and decision-making is a compelling reason to retain our current at-large voting system.

Moreover, we find it deeply troubling that a member representing another locality is sponsoring legislation that directly affects the governance of Chesapeake. Local governments are best equipped to understand and address the unique needs of their communities. External interference in these matters goes against the principles of local self-governance and disrupts the democratic process that should be shaped by those intimately familiar with the dynamics of our city.

In conclusion, we respectfully request that you consider the implications of HB1304 (Convirs-Fowler) on the City of Chesapeake. Our at-large voting system has been fundamental in ensuring an equitable and inclusive representation of our community's diverse voices. We urge you to preserve this democratic tradition and reject HB1304 (Convirs-Fowler), safeguarding the democratic values that are integral to our city's identity.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We trust that you will weigh the potential consequences of HB1304 (Convirs-Fowler) on our community and make a decision that upholds the best interests of the citizens of Chesapeake.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick West". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "W".

Dr. Richard W. "Rick" West
Mayor, City of Chesapeake

cc: Delegate James "Jay" Leftwich
Delegate Bonita Anthony
Delegate Baxter Ennis
Christopher M. Price, City Manager
Catherine Lindley, City Attorney
Sandy Madison, Clerk of City Council