

Testimony for Montgomery County Council  
Hearing on  
Expedited Bill 41-21, Council Districts – Boundaries  
By  
Darren Fenwick  
November 17, 2021

Dear Councilmembers:

I am writing to express my support for the map proposed by the County's Commission on Redistricting ("Commission"). While I support the map adopted by the Commission, the two alternative maps were also good. The Commission did an incredible job reconciling various views from residents and members of the Commission. The meetings were accessible, and Commissioners proactively sought input and feedback from residents.

While I understand not everyone is pleased by the result, I believe the map reflects the process established by Commissioners and the role of an independent commission. Unfortunately, in too many states, and communities, bi-partisan calls for independent commissions that were heeded are being maligned and/or ignored in a similar fashion. I've been saddened by testimony submitted by some County residents because I believe the comments are rooted in ignorance and division. If the Council decides to edit the map, I urge it to do so out of compassion and wisdom.

As a District 5 resident, some commentators testified that Silver Spring and North Bethesda have nothing in common. While Silver Spring is "wonderfully diverse" the "political sensibilities" of those in North Bethesda don't align with those of residents in Silver Spring. Silver Spring is wonderfully diverse in several ways, including thought, ideas, and faith. To assume Silver Spring and North Bethesda are monolithic is rooted in ignorance and, in my view, bigotry. I gleaned from some testimonies that Silver Spring looks different, therefore it is different, as if all people of color or all white people hold the same political views and sensibilities.

One commentator testified that "traffic and roads, schools, fire and police are not high priority issues impacting Silver Spring", as if residents of Silver Spring are highly disinterested in safe neighborhoods and roads and great schools. These issues are a high priority for me. As a pedestrian who's almost been hit by cars in Silver Spring twice, someone who lived at the intersection of 16<sup>th</sup> and East West Highway – where it seems there were several car accidents every month at the same intersection - and someone who occasionally rents cars, I'm concerned about traffic and roads because I don't want to die on them or have other people die on them. I also want and deserve to live in a safe neighborhood. The idea that these concerns aren't high priorities is ridiculous and unfounded – again, Silver Spring is not monolithic, neither is North Bethesda.

Unfortunately, reading some of the testimony and listening to some commentators one would think we are so different that we need passports and to cross checkpoints to enter various

neighborhoods in the County. My tax dollars support County services for everyone. The laws passed by the Council apply to everyone, not certain "communities". If we are so different, perhaps we should economically segregate communities in the County or disband the Council and devolve into tribes, which can vary within communities.

Montgomery County is wonderfully diverse; that is our strength. It requires us to get to know one another better, to learn new ways to resolve differences, communicate, share our desires, and our politics. I firmly believe the County can be a model to other jurisdictions on how to breakdown walls and bridge divides.

The lines on the map are just that, lines. They are not walls. If the Council decides to make changes to the map adopted by the Commission, I urge it not to make changes that will build walls between neighbors and "otherize" us. We need each other.

Sincerely,

Darren Fenwick  
Silver Spring