



Common Cause Georgia
100 Edgewood Avenue
Suite 1275
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Georgia Senate Leadership,

For nearly 50 years Common Cause has advocated for transparent governance with the aim of creating a democracy truly accountable to its citizens. House bill 515, which is currently in the Georgia Senate, does not adhere to this goal of fair and open legislative actions. House bill 515 redraws House legislative districts by removing Black voters into districts with “safe” seats and moving White voters into Republican districts that voted for the Democratic presidential candidate in 2016. We strongly object to this racial gerrymander along with the means by which this constitutionally-suspect move was achieved. The short notice and lack of public comment enabled legislators to “work in the dark,” thereby depriving Georgia citizens of a transparent process. We urge you to oppose the bill for these reasons.

House bill 515 was dropped late in the legislative session and a hearing was called by Chairman Johnnie Caldwell, author of the bill, that gave the public less than 24 hours notice. At the hearing, the chairman refused public comment and the proceeding lasted around five minutes. The next legislative day, which was Crossover Day, the House took up the bill on the floor for a vote. Although there were several objections to the bill based on the lack of transparency, the House passed the bill down Party lines.

Given the lack of public involvement in the debate over House bill 515, we urge you to oppose any movement on this bill.

Passage of this racial gerrymander would likely lead to protracted and costly litigation of the maps. Those costs and any attorneys’ fees awarded by the court would be borne by our already overburdened citizens. Legislators should proceed cautiously as they consider supporting a bill or resolution that could potentially become a tax burden on Georgia – particularly because of its constitutionality questions.

Additionally, Common Cause is concerned that this bill is an unfunded mandate on the counties of Fulton, Spalding, and Henry to reproduce voter cards and other voting information that could potentially cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars. Interim redistricting places an undue burden on these local governments as they are the ones who are required to pay for the changes the legislature makes between the Censuses.

We urge you to oppose House bill 515 and any other interim redistricting measures. The racial gerrymander rammed through the House undermines our representative democracy by allowing politicians to choose their voters instead of voters choosing their politicians. The passage of these new district maps will lead to both county and state funded taxpayer dollars essentially wasted in an effort to ensure incumbent protection.

Thank you for your service and your attention to this very urgent matter.

Respectfully,

Sara Henderson
Policy Director
Common Cause Georgia

Cc: Senate Redistricting and Reapportionment Committee