

Good afternoon. My name is Cris Pope. I have been part of the Cicero community as the Director of the Interfaith Leadership Project of Cicero and Berwyn for the past 10 years. Interfaith is an institution based community organization working in Cicero and Berwyn for the past 20- years. Our members are mainly local churches and health organizations whose mission is to call to collaboration communities of faith and organizations to create positive change in Berwyn and Cicero by fostering a united voice through organizing people, promoting civic engagement and developing leadership for social justice.

Interfaith is also a member of the Illinois Latino Agenda, a 49 member coalition of Latino non-profit organizations working on issues of concern to Latino communities in Illinois. Currently we have been working on the current redistricting process to protect Latino voting rights and increase their ability to elect candidates responsive to their issues.

Through this process we created a proposal for new representative districts based on our agreed upon interests. We have these maps here today, with the exception of the South side map. We are still in the process of finalizing legislative district boundaries in that area and we plan to submit a south side map at a House redistricting hearing next week.

Also, having put much time, energy and thoughtful discussion into our proposal, we believe that we, as well as all Illinois residents, should have the opportunity to view the maps being considered by the General Assembly and give our input on their impact on our communities. If the idea of this process is to create legislative districts that truly represent their constituencies, then these residents must have a voice on the final proposal. We ask that there be another set of hearings to discuss the proposed district maps and a comment period of at least two weeks before a vote is taken.

The Cicero/ Berwyn communities have seen significant growth in the Latino population in the few decades. Cicero now has a Latino population that makes up 86.6% of the community, and the Berwyn Latino population represents 59.2% of the community. This is an increase even from the 2007 Census estimates of 83.8% Latinos in Cicero and 52.7% in Berwyn. This continued increase in population merits an increase in voting power and political representation for the Latino community.

Being separate municipalities with distinct governments, political systems, and community needs, we feel that it is important that in the redrawing of the districts, these communities are afforded the opportunity to have the strongest possible political representation. Both communities already struggle to attain appropriate political representation because of the high number of non-citizens in these areas.

Cicero and Berwyn are also distinct from surrounding communities in that the majority of residents are Mexican American and Mexican immigrants. The communities are very young with children representing about 20% of the population. Education levels in these communities are relatively low with just 75% of Berwyn residents and 48% of Cicero residents having a high school diploma.

The median household income in Cicero is \$41,989, while in Berwyn this figure is \$48,414. The per capita income in Cicero of \$13,954 is significantly lower than the per capita income of Berwyn at \$20,951. Over 80% of Cicero families speak a language other than English at home and 74.4% of Cicero residents are foreign born. In Berwyn 53% of families speak a language other than English at home and only 18% are foreign born.

Given that there are specific needs of growing, low-income, immigrant communities, we want to be sure that any redistricting proposal takes into account the specific needs of these communities.

Cicero currently is represented entirely by 1 State Senate District and 1 State Legislative District. This has helped increase the attention the State of Illinois paid to the needs of the very large Latino community. Currently Berwyn is represented by 3 State Legislative Districts and 3 Senate Districts. This is for a community of 56,600 people. This poses a real challenge for residents to have sufficient voice in the in these districts. We believe Cicero and Berwyn to be specific communities of interest and request that these interests be respected when drawing legislative boundaries.

In closing, I would like to once again request that after legislative maps are proposed to the General Assembly we would once again have the opportunity to provide our input. We have showed you our maps, and we would like to see yours before they are voted on.

Thank you.