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Dear Honorable Members of the Illinois House and Senate Redistricting Committees:

It has been said that in Illinois, elected representatives pick their voters instead of the other way around. This is true anywhere that politicians draw redistricting maps, especially if one party has a heavy upper hand; no matter the party.

Every ten years, Illinois lawmakers - without substantial public input or the use of an independent commission - have the power to redraw their own state legislative districts and protect their seats against challengers.

This gerrymandering process results in legislators purposefully creating unfair districts that benefit political aspirations and harm our democracy. Gerrymandering predetermines outcomes, increases polarization, and produces uncompetitive elections, career politicians, and governmental deadlock, all because politicians have little to no reason to fear the consequences of being thrown out of office. Illinois is a leading example of the harm that gerrymandering does to our democracy. Gerrymandering is not a Democrat or Republican issue — gerrymandering is a democracy issue.

Elections should represent the will of the people, not politicians. We need maps that are drawn to truly represent the best interests of people across the state and allow them to meaningfully participate in our democracy. We need to empower communities to elect candidates of their choosing.

To do this, Illinoisans deserve a truly transparent and equitable mapping process. Unfortunately, since the start of the redistricting process on March 17, 2021, what we have witnessed thus far does not bode well for a transparent and equitable process.

To date, state lawmakers have not demonstrated that accurate data will be used as required by the U.S. Constitution, Illinois Constitution and applicable laws. Witnesses from multiple advocacy groups have expressed concerns about the flawed redistricting plans. I share their concerns, including that using outdated and faulty data risks the disenfranchisement of voters. It appears that some lawmakers plan to proceed with their predetermined remap plans despite the overwhelming testimony of their own witnesses.

I echo the recommendation of one such advocacy group, CHANGE Illinois, and request that the House and Senate Redistricting Committees postpone meetings so leaders can define what data will be used and so that general guidelines and uniform rules are established to ensure members of the public have ample time to prepare to participate and to incorporate more transparency and accountability into the process. This once-in-a-decade process must be done correctly through the use of accurate data.

A decade ago, during the last redistricting, voters in Orland Park were disenfranchised through the use of gerrymandering. Orland Park is a municipality located in southwestern Cook County in northeastern Illinois. Orland Park is a part of the Chicago metropolitan area and has an estimated population of 58,000.

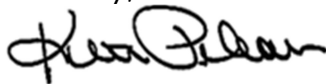
As one of the south suburban Cook County's largest municipalities, it is important that Orland Park's representation in the Illinois General Assembly be unified in the smallest amount of legislative districts as possible. This allows the citizens of Orland Park to elect representatives that more directly reflect our community's interests and concerns. It is important that district lines be compact, contiguous, and impartial to political party.

The redistricting map a decade ago divided the Village of Orland Park into three Senate and four House Districts. Instead of the current district map, any future district lines should closely align with the municipal boundaries of the Village of Orland Park instead of the current non-contiguous and non-compact configuration.

In 2019, Governor Pritzker campaigned for office on a promise to end the political gerrymandering that has made so many elected officials in this state comfortable to the point of being utterly unaccountable to anyone but their friends and donors. He has stressed that districts should be drawn so that they are competitive. Governor Pritzker has promised to veto any map that is unfair. Based on how this redistricting process has been undertaken thus far, it appears likely that he will be presented with the opportunity to uphold his veto promise in short order.

Before Illinois lawmakers can recover voters' record-low trust in their political leadership, they must first recover voters' trust in the legitimacy of the districts they're elected to represent.

Sincerely,



Keith Pekau
Mayor, Orland Park

Cc: Orland Park Village Board
Madeleine Doubek, Executive Director, CHANGE Illinois
David Greising, President & CEO, Better Government Association