

Testimony of Arthur S. Friedson
Before the Senate Redistricting Committee
April 2, 2021

As hearings begin about redistricting, I hope you will consider the significance of the north lakefront's Jewish community and its significance in Lakeview.

In many ways, the Jewish community of Lakeview is unique. In other places -both in Chicago and beyond- there are enclaves of Orthodox Jews who have their own unique needs. While these may be sizable voting blocs, they represent less than a fifth of the Jewish people and their interests and politics are often at odds with Jews who are not Orthodox.

Lakeview is home to a thriving Modern Orthodox synagogue, an Orthodox Chabad synagogue, one of the largest Conservative congregations in North America, and a Reform congregation that is a landmark. In addition, there is a traditional minyan that is a crossover between the Orthodox and Conservative movements, and a thriving non-denominational group that is part of a nationally emerging trend in American Jewry. And for every Jewish individual who is aligned with one of these institutions, there are probably 1.5 to 2.0 Jews in the neighborhood who are not affiliated with a Jewish religious institution but share values, background and experience with their Jewish neighbors who do choose to affiliate.

Having this mix of different Jewish communities in one small geographic area is unusual, but what makes Lakeview truly different is the fact all of these Jewish institutions actively cooperate and coordinate on a regular basis. While elsewhere, these groups are often siloed, in Lakeview there are many times throughout the year when they come together for educational, religious, and social action projects and events.

In addition to the synagogues, other important infrastructure exists in the neighborhood to support the Jewish community. The Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School and the Chicago Jewish Day School provide K-8 education. There are robust pre-school programs at Temple Sholom and at the Florence Heller JCC, and several after-school religious school programs. There are kosher and kosher-style restaurants that cater to the population. The community also houses a mikvah, a ritual bath that is a fundamental part of traditional Jewish observance.

For Orthodox Jews, there is an *eruv*, a physical installation that encircles a defined perimeter that allows them certain flexibility in Sabbath observance that is rarely available to them. The eruv, for example, allows them to push a baby carriage to synagogue, allowing families to attend Sabbath services together as opposed to leaving one adult home to care for the children. The Lakeview eruv is a major factor in drawing Sabbath-observant Jews to the neighborhood.

The Lakeview Jewish community is broad and varied, but they share a host of common values, interests, and a progressive commitment to building a better world - *Tikun Olam* - that crosses all of their individual affiliations and binds them together as one of the most

dynamic, thriving Jewish communities in America today. We raise our voices together in prayer, in song, and in community action. We deserve to have those voices clearly represented in Springfield and Washington, D.C.

Respectfully,

Arthur S. Friedson
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