



## CHANGE Illinois Testimony: Transparent and Accountable Redistricting

*Illinois Senate Subcommittee on Redistricting for Chicago South*

*To: Chair Peters and committee members*

*From: Madeleine Doubek, Executive Director of CHANGE Illinois*

Thank you Chair Peters and committee members for the opportunity to provide written testimony about the remapping process for Illinois state and congressional districts. My name is Madeleine Doubek and I am the Executive Director of CHANGE Illinois and the CHANGE Illinois Action Fund. Both are nonpartisan nonprofits that educate, engage and advocate for ethics and efficiency in governments and elections. CHANGE Illinois is a coalition and alongside our diverse partners in more than 30 organizations, we long have advocated for an independent and transparent redistricting process that results in equitable maps.

There's now been a handful of hearings that cover almost half of the counties in Illinois. At those hearings we asked simple questions, seeking answers that would help the public understand how to engage in this year's remapping process. Yet, many questions still remain unanswered and participation by the general public at these hearings has not been nearly enough to ensure that these maps will accurately reflect the many diverse communities all over Illinois.

In order for the public to be able to participate in shaping their districts in any meaningful way, these important questions need to be answered. It is still not completely clear what area this committee oversees according to the map provided on <https://ilsenateredistricting.com> just one week ago. Over the past few days, changes were and continue to be made to the Senate website's list of hearing dates and times. We remain deeply concerned about how these proceedings have been conducted thus far. It is clear that still not enough is being done by lawmakers and staff to ensure awareness, transparency and a meaningful opportunity for people in various regions to engage.

If this continues, lawmakers will fail to meet the goals of an inclusive process that allows communities to guide it.

If this process is truly meant to be inclusive, then what steps were taken to ensure that the public was made aware? We appreciate our colleagues who are here today to advocate for how their communities should be considered in the next remap. But, there are many more everyday people who still are unable to participate. There still haven't been any steps taken to ensure language access is not an impediment to people's ability to participate. Posting notice on government websites is clearly insufficient to reach the broad public participation that is needed.



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There were a number of community and good government organizations whose representatives testified last week and all of us, independently, said these committee meetings need more transparency. Illinoisans need to know what data lawmakers are using, as well as what data they should use when they draw maps to submit. People from different parts of the state need to know which committees they're expected to engage with in this process.

How will this subcommittee use the feedback it received today from community members? Will a map proposal be brought back for people in these same communities to review and discuss before a vote is taken by the General Assembly? The answers to these questions remain unclear. This makes it even more difficult for community members to participate in the redrawing of their districts in a meaningful way.

It is imperative that more information be provided about how these hearings will be conducted, what data will be used, what will be discussed, and that more advance notice is given to the public about the hearings and about how to participate. Please consider making the invitation list public and advertise these meetings in the media.

Illinoisans need and deserve a transparent and independent process. A survey conducted by CHANGE Illinois last year found that 75 percent of Illinois voters support independent redistricting. A proposal we have introduced with Sen. Melinda Bush, SB2554, would help meet these demands.

In order to meet these challenges, our proposal, SB2554, is a plan that would ensure more equitable and transparent maps than those of the past. We ask that the committee implement these necessary reforms immediately:

- Hold a minimum of 35 well publicized hearings that not only give people a chance to testify, but ensure lawmakers respond to feedback and consider testimony in map proposals.
- Implement fairness standards that prioritize compliance with the Federal Voting Rights Act and the Illinois Voting Rights Act to make certain that communities of color have the opportunity to elect their preferred candidates.
- Require mappers to respect communities of interest and geographic boundaries that already exist.
- The web address that has been established to inform the public of the remapping process must be advertised extensively. The website should include testimony, map submissions by the public, proposals being drafted by the committee, and all other documents and communications relevant to its work. A compliance report must be issued with any map proposal describing how the plan meets requirements in the federal and state voting rights acts. The report must respond to testimony and maps submitted by the public.
- Establish a period between the introduction of the proposed maps and votes by the chambers to ensure that additional public hearings are held and the public has time to understand and respond to proposed maps *before votes*.
- Fix the implementation date of the recently enacted No Representation Without Population Act, a law that will end prison gerrymandering. The newly enacted law still deprives representation for those who are incarcerated for another decade.

As lawmakers, you have a responsibility to make it abundantly clear to the public that they can participate in defining their communities in Illinois' remapping process that will determine districts for an entire decade.

We recommend subcommittees postpone future meetings until leaders define what data they and the public will use. We recommend consistent rules, geographies and guidelines be established to ensure members of the public have ample time to prepare to participate in a process that is transparent and accountable.

Illinois' districts belong to the people. They expect an independent and transparent process that values the principle of one person, one vote. We again urge you to meet their clear expectations.

Madeleine Doubek  
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