



Coalition For A Better Chinese American Community 華埠更好團結聯盟

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ILLINOIS SENATE REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

March 25, 2021

Hello, my name is Darek Lau and I am a youth organizer with Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community, a policy and advocacy organization based in Chicago's Chinatown. I am presenting a statement from the Coalition and some of our partner organizations.

We thank the Senate Redistricting Committee for listening to Chinatown voices ten years ago which led to passing the Illinois Voting Rights Act of 2011, establishing the blueprint for communities of interest and protecting the voting rights of racial and language minorities. As a result, along with the advocacy efforts of a multi-racial coalition of community advocates, we went from being split among four state rep districts to consolidating 90% of Asian Americans into one cohesive district, now represented by State Rep Theresa Mah. Our voices solidified, we stood in a better position to fight to hold our elected officials accountable and have our needs met.

Another decade has passed, and we sustain that the Asian population and number of registered voters have grown even larger in Chinatown and surrounding areas. As a growing community with students, parents, and elders in need of culturally and linguistically sensitive social services, fair redistricting is critical to preserving and expanding funding for such programs and services. However, it is a gross characterization to picture our Chinese American residents solely as an ethnic and language minority in need; we are also a growing labor force of professionals and business owners and an increasingly active voice in civic participation.

With our shared and deeply ingrained belief in participatory democracy, we support an open process with community input, and thus we urge the Committee to develop a thoughtful redistricting process that is open for and accountable to all communities of interest. We cannot stress further the importance of the inclusion of community voices, especially those of us most marginalized, in order to guide our legislators into drawing fair and equitable boundaries for all. We thank you for holding this hearing; and we urge that you continue these conversations with communities.

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