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Public Hearing Testimony
Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee – Chicago South
March 25, 2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Steven Monroy, and I am a staff attorney with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. MALDEF is a national civil rights law firm. For over 50 years, MALDEF has worked to protect the voting rights of Latinos through community education, advocacy and litigation. Our organization has been involved in Illinois redistricting since the 1980s. We regularly partnered with stakeholders representing diverse communities, developed model maps, and monitored the state's compliance with minority voting rights, particularly the Voting Rights Act.

Latinos are about 17.5% of the state's total population and about 15% of the state's voting age population. Latinos are the fastest growing minority group in IL but redistricting historically has not reflected increased Latino political potential.

We thank the committee for providing this opportunity to comment on the impact of redistricting on the South Side of Chicago. According to the map provided on the Senate Redistricting website, this subcommittee covers large Latino communities in Little Village, Back of the Yards, and South Chicago. We urge the committee to carefully study the growth of the Latino community and provide additional opportunities for grassroots organizations and community members to provide input on the redistricting process. As of now, the Senate redistricting hearings have been scheduled at 3:00 or 5:00 pm on weekdays and may not be accessible to members of the general public. As the committee develops proposed maps for

consideration, we ask that you specifically describe the data, and data sources that you are considering so that advocates and the general public can analyze the same data and produce meaningful recommendations.

At the first hearing last week, on March 17, we requested that the committee produce a map of the subcommittee regions and we thank the committee for posting the map on the website. However, we noted that the subcommittee assignment of the Western Cook County part of the Chicago West and Western Cook County is not defined on the map and appears to overlap with the Northwest Cook County region. As you are aware, the Northwest Cook County subcommittee has a hearing scheduled for tomorrow, March 26. We ask that the committee clarify the boundaries between the Western Cook County and Northwest Cook County areas on the map.

In order for members of the public to have an effective voice in the process, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Correct the Senate hearings map to identify the boundaries between the Western Cook County and Northwest Cook County subcommittee areas.
2. Specifically describe the data and data sources that you are considering in this redistricting process.
3. Hearings should be scheduled at least two weeks in advance and be widely publicized through various media sources.
4. Provide at least two weeks between releasing a plan and holding a hearing to consider a plan, so the public can review and provide meaningful feedback.
5. Hold hearings or provide other forums for community input on evenings and weekends, as the House plans.

The Latino community has historically experienced voting discrimination and attempts to dilute the effectiveness of their votes. Redistricting must take into account the need to overcome the lingering effects of discrimination and offer minority voters an equal opportunity to elect their candidates of choice. New district boundaries should fairly reflect minority voting strength and not seek to minimize or dilute the minority vote.

Thank you for your time.

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