

To: Senate Redistricting Committee Members

From: Andrew Tonachel

Date of Testimony: April 8, 2021

Good afternoon. My name is Andrew Tonachel. I am a long-time resident of Chicago's northwest side, and I am testifying today for a rigorous, inclusive, and transparent redistricting process across our State.

I appreciate that the Legislature has a difficult task ahead: to approve new maps without final Census data. Nevertheless, there is enough data to develop maps that foster equity and future investment in our democracy if, and only if, that data includes the crucial testimony and lived experience of communities of interest and knowledgeable advocates. These hearings--which have not been publicized adequately to date--must be the start, not the end, of such a process.

I work with youth and young adults in multiple parts of the City but mostly on the south side. Many of these new and future voters are skeptical of our government and its commitment to giving them a fair shake. While history informs their skepticism, this redistricting process is an opportunity to start changing that track record. By facilitating an inclusive and transparent process, one that engages residents every step of the way, Illinois can begin building trust with disenfranchised communities and inspiring future leaders.

This is not the time for mystery or expedited decision-making. I urge you to facilitate a process with multiple pathways for participation and an outcome that ensures communities of color are fully represented. To do this, you must center input from these communities, from now through additional hearings before drafted maps are approved. This is a golden opportunity to show that government can be of, by, and for all residents.

I look forward to your investment in this opportunity and to having the young people I work with see their communities fully represented. Thank you.