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Chairman Aquino and members of the Senate Redistricting Committee:

My name is Marie Dillon and I'm the director of policy for the Better Government Association, a nonprofit watchdog group focused on transparency, accountability and efficiency in Illinois government.

Thank you for scheduling these hearings so that members of the public can advocate for fair legislative maps. Senate President Harmon, House Speaker Welch, Gov. Pritzker — all of them have promised to deliver fair maps.

But what is a fair map, and how do you draw one?

Last year, the Better Government Association hired consultants Rob Paral and Jim Lewis to draw simulated maps for Congress and both houses of the Illinois General Assembly following the principles of independent redistricting.

We asked them to draw compact, contiguous districts that were close to equal in population, that protect minority representation and that preserve communities.

They were not to consider voter history or addresses of incumbents.

Only after the maps were finished did they plot the homes of incumbents on the maps and overlay voter data to project the likely outcome of elections using these simulated maps.

You can see those maps and read our analysis at [bettergov.org](https://bettergov.org). You can also compare them to the current maps, which were drawn in the usual way.

To sum up the findings briefly:

- No, our team didn't draw nice neat squares. Some amount of "gerrymandering" is needed to protect minority representation, to keep communities intact and to follow geographic and political boundaries. But side by side, our maps are simpler than the current maps. There's even a metric that demonstrates that.

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- Our simulated maps preserve the number of African-American districts and perhaps increase Latino representation. This was challenging, given the projected population shifts in Illinois. But our mapmakers were able to do it.
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- Perhaps surprising to some is that the maps did not turn this blue state red. The partisan balance, again based on voter history factored in *after* the maps were drawn, would remain more or less the same, assuming the handful of swing districts don't fall one way.
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- The downside for incumbents is that they couldn't count on keeping "their" district. Our mapmakers didn't consider those addresses when drawing the maps. Instead they worked in the best interests of voters. That means some incumbents end up in districts with other incumbents, and even those who don't might have to work harder to be re-elected. From a voter perspective, competitive elections are a good thing.

Our maps support the argument that fair redistricting is best accomplished by an independent body instead of by partisans drawing their own districts. The people of Illinois have tried to amend their constitution to make this change, and the BGA has long supported that effort. Yet here we are.

I want to stress that it is still within the power of the General Assembly to embrace a process based on the principles of independent redistricting, prioritizing communities and voters rather than political parties and incumbents. That is the way to a fair map.

Sincerely yours,



Marie C. Dillon  
Director of Policy