



8/28/21

CHANGE Illinois Testimony

To: House and Senate Redistricting Committees

From: CHANGE Illinois

Thank you Chairs Sims, Hernandez and committee members for providing our organization with the opportunity to come before you to weigh in on the state legislative and representative maps that have been signed into law by Governor Pritzker and any potential changes to those maps. My name is Ryan Tolley and I am the Policy Director for CHANGE Illinois Action Fund and CHANGE Illinois.

I would like to raise a few of our concerns, many of which remain unchanged since we last testified during a May redistricting hearing and were shared by our colleagues, friends and partners at hearings earlier this week. We would also like to provide a few suggestions to the committee as you consider making changes to the legislative and representative maps.

Our organization raised many concerns about the redistricting process during the Spring, most notably around the lack of meaningful public participation and transparency as well as the use of American Community Survey data without the 2020 Census data. During those hearings, it was repeated over and over again by lawmakers that the Illinois constitution demanded that a map be finished by June 30, 2021, despite many objections from members of the public and advocacy organizations about the use of ACS data and not having enough time to provide any meaningful input on the map proposals released in late May.

Again, we find ourselves in a similar situation, involved in hearings about changes to the maps that are not available to the public, with the majority of participating community members requesting more time to see, review, analyze, and provide feedback. Only this time there are no state laws requiring a map to be completed by August 31 and there is no constitutional deadline imposing a timeline on changes to the maps.

We recommend that this committee give ample time for the public to review and provide input on any new maps or proposed changes to existing maps before a vote is taken. We recommend that at minimum, the public is given two weeks to review as was called for by and not afforded to community members for the current maps.



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Organizations, who historically have been involved in redistricting, have said that the current timeline isn't nearly enough time for them to provide meaningful feedback. If these organizations need more time, it is unreasonable to expect members of the public to be informed, understand changes to the maps, and reschedule their lives on such short notice to provide input on new maps that will affect the communities they live and work in a matter of days. Much less a matter of hours if no additional time is provided for the public to weigh in after changes to the map are drafted and made public. In reality, the process so far has robbed everyday voters of their ability to participate in a way that lives up to the rhetoric and ideals of the inclusive process.

Our organization continues to have many of the same concerns about the lack of meaningful public participation in these hearings. As you repeatedly heard in the hearings over the past few days, advocates and community organizations don't feel as though they had a voice in how maps were drawn during the Spring. And unless there's a significant change in the way their input is incorporated into the final product from then to now, those feelings persist.

At a stakeholder meeting with the Illinois Redistricting Collaborative, a coalition of over 30 diverse organizations, earlier this week, we encouraged people to attend these hearings. We were met with concerns from organizations and individuals, who participated in one or more of the previous 50 redistricting hearings, that their input would not seriously be considered by this committee based on their experience with prior hearings.

In reviewing the two resolutions that accompanied the maps voted on by the General Assembly, Senate Resolution 326 and House Resolution 359, it is concerning to note that very little public input is referenced in either.

The Senate resolution only mentions five instances of testimony or public feedback that guided map drawers' hands. The House resolution only took public input and testimony into account in 15 of the 118 districts. It's not clear to me how to reconcile the rhetoric that the public has so many opportunities to participate and that they are being listened to if out of the hundreds of people that submitted input and hundreds of hours of hearing time that Senate and House members only felt that so few testimonies were worthy of consideration for the maps that are currently law.

This fact further elevates our concerns that the process this week and next, that so closely mirrors the rushed process in the Spring, will not provide a different result and that any additional testimony received over the past few days will be ignored.

The voices and concerns of those who have already testified this year including Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition, UCCRO, League of Women Voters of Illinois, Latino Policy Forum, Common Cause Illinois, Indivisible Naperville, Better Government Association, Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community, Black Roots Alliance, MALDEF, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, Mujeres Latinas en Accion, Nonprofit Utopia, Faith Coalition for the Common



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Good, Mano a Mano Family Resource Center, and many more organizations need to be heard and reflected in any changes to this map.

Many more individual community members provided testimony that is also not reflected in the current maps. I would strongly urge committee members and members of the General Assembly to go back and review the testimony from the Spring that largely seemed to be ignored and draw maps that prioritize that testimony over any political or self-interest.

Additionally, our concerns over the use of American Community Survey data came to bear after the 2020 Census data was released. We now know that districts are malapportioned with a population deviation three times higher than the 10% deviation standard. Previously, we asked these committees, well in advance of any constitutional deadlines, to appeal to the courts in order to seek relief and use the 2020 census data. But, we were met with silence and an apparent refusal from the General Assembly to even consider seeking relief that has now been provided to other states through their courts. Instead, after passing the maps, lawmakers issued assurances that the current map met all legal requirements and claimed the population deviations to be nonconsequential.

There is little doubt that these districts will have to be fixed given they are likely unconstitutional, but we would recommend that the committee does not do the bare minimum and fix a few select districts. The 2020 Census data did not just reveal that a few districts were malapportioned, it shows that many of the projections in the ACS data were inaccurate, some of which are highlighted in the Democrats' staff presentation. We strongly believe that a thorough review of the entire map is needed and, again, that changes are made prioritizing community members testimony and input that was largely ignored during the Spring.

Once again, it is the people of this state and the communities across the state that are left voiceless in the redistricting process. The proceeding today and over the past year reinforces the dire need to reform the redistricting process. We hope, for the sake of future generations of Illinoisans, that members of this committee choose to prioritize and listen to voices of community members moving forward. To continue down the current path that fails to include voices of the communities confirms that this process is broken. Redistricting should truly focus on how to involve, prioritize, and ultimately lift up communities across Illinois for the decade ahead.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity and I am happy to answer any questions from committee members.

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