
Commission Meeting

of

NEW JERSEY CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

*“Testimony from the public on the establishment of Congressional districts in New Jersey
that will be in effect for the next 10 years”*

LOCATION: Donald M. Payne, Sr. School of
Technology
Newark, New Jersey

DATE: December 5, 2021
12:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMISSION PRESENT:

Honorable John E. Wallace, Jr., Chair
Janice Fuller, Democratic Delegation Chair
Iris Delgado
Senator Vin Gopal
Stephanie Lagos
Jeffrey Nash
Dana Redd
Doug Steinhardt, Esq., Republican Delegation Chair
Michele Albano
Jeanne Dovgala Ashmore
Mark Duffy
Mark LoGrippe
Lynda Pagliughi



ALSO PRESENT:

Raysa Martinez Kruger
Office of Legislative Services
Commission Secretary

Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey

DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS

Janice Fuller
Delegation Chair

Iris Delgado
Vin Gopal
Stephanie Lagos
Jeff Nash
Dana Redd



REPUBLICAN MEMBERS

Doug Steinhardt
Delegation Chair

Michele Albano
Jeanne Ashmore
Mark Duffy
Mark LoGrippe
Lynda Pagliughi

NEW JERSEY CONGRESSIONAL
REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

STATE HOUSE ANNEX • P.O. BOX 068 • TRENTON, NJ 08625-0068

John E. Wallace, Jr.
Chair

REDISTRICTING COMMISSION NOTICE

TO: MEMBERS OF THE REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

FROM: JOHN E. WALLACE, JR. – CHAIR

SUBJECT: **REDISTRICTING COMMISSION MEETING – DECEMBER 5, 2021**

The public may address comments and questions to Raysa Martinez Kruger, Commission Secretary, or make scheduling inquiries to Sophie Love, Secretary, at (609)847-3890 or email: OLSAideREDC@njleg.org. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the Commission by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.

The Redistricting Commission will meet on Sunday, December 5, 2021 at 12:00 PM at the Essex County Donald M. Payne Sr. School of Technology, 498-544 West Market Street, Newark, NJ 07107. The meeting will take place in the Fr. Edwin D. Leahy Auditorium, First Floor Lobby, 9th Avenue entrance.

The purpose of the meeting will be to take testimony from the public on the establishment of congressional districts in New Jersey that will be in effect for the next 10 years.

Members of the public may view the proceedings via the New Jersey Legislature home page at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/> or via the Commission's home page at <https://www.njredistrictingcommission.org/default.asp>.

Those wishing to testify may register online in advance of the meeting at <https://www.njredistrictingcommission.org/schedule.asp>. Registration is also available at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>. Select December 5 on the calendar and click on Redistricting Commission for the registration link. Advance registrations must be received by Friday, December 3, 2021 at 3:00 PM. Upon successful registration, you will view a printable receipt on screen.

(OVER)

Registration will also be available on site. To ensure that all who wish to testify can do so, the Chair will limit public testimony to 5 minutes per person. Extra time will be allotted for those needing the assistance of a translator.

If you require language interpretation services to testify, please contact the Office of Legislative Services at (609) 847-3890 to discuss and arrange for interpretation services in advance of the meeting.

You may also submit written testimony instead of, or in addition to, oral testimony by email to OLSaideREDC@njleg.org. If providing written testimony in addition to oral testimony at the meeting, please bring 17 copies for distribution to Commission members. Written testimony will be included in the Commission's record and distributed to all Commission members.

This meeting will observe the COVID-19 protocols in place at our host location. All attendees must wear a mask when inside the facility and maintain 3 feet social distance.

Parking is available behind the school building on South 11th Street.

Issued 11/24/21

For reasonable accommodation of a disability call the telephone number above, or for persons with hearing loss dial 711 for NJ Relay. The provision of assistive listening devices requires 24 hours' notice. CART or sign language interpretation requires 5 days' notice.

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(The New Jersey Congressional Redistricting Commission held a meeting on December 5, 2021. Members of the Commission present via teleconference were Jeanne Dovgala Ashmore, Jeffrey Nash, Lynda Pagliughi, and Doug Steinhardt.)

JUSTICE JOHN E. WALLACE, Jr. (Chair): Good afternoon, and welcome to the eighth public hearing of the Redistricting Commission.

It is a pleasure to be here in Newark, and we want to thank you very much for allowing us to meet in this very fine auditorium.

The purpose of today's hearing is to continue to give the public an opportunity to express their views as to what the congressional districts should look like in the State of New Jersey.

We want to hear your concerns this afternoon. We'll hear from those citizens who have registered, and those who have asked to speak today.

Before we do that, I would ask that the secretary please call the roll.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER (Commission Secretary):
Commissioner Redd.

MS. REDD: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Pagliughi. (no response)

MR. NEELY (Republican Delegation Executive Director):
Commissioner Pagliughi?

MS. PAGLIUGHI: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Nash.

COMMISSIONER NASH: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner LoGripo.

MR. LoGRIPPO: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Lagos.

MS. LAGOS: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Gopal. (no response)

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Duffy.

MR. DUFFY: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Delgado. (no response)

Commissioner Ashmore.

MR. NEELY: Commissioner Ashmore?

COMMISSIONER ASHMORE: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Albano.

MS. ALBANO: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Republican Chair Steinhardt.

MR. NEELY: Chairman Steinhardt?

MR. STEINHARDT (Republican Delegation Chair): Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Democratic Chair Fuller.

MS. FULLER (Democratic Delegation Chair): Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Chair Wallace.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Here.

Thank you, Madam Secretary.

I would indicate that there are several of us who are not physically present but are present here today. So everything that is being transcribed today will be available to them.

Before I call our first speaker, is there anyone on the Commission who would like to make a statement?

MS. FULLER: Thank you, Chairman Wallace.

On behalf of my fellow Democratic Commissioners, I just want to thank everyone for being here to offer your testimony as part of our ongoing process to elicit public comment and input as we work to develop the map.

And I want to thank County Executive DiVincenzo, Chief of Staff Phil Alagia, and the entire County for allowing us to be in this beautiful facility today.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you.

Anything else? (no response)

All right; at this time we'll begin with our speakers.

The first speaker is Mayor Ras Baraka.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF COMMISSION: I think he's on his way.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right; followed by Robert Jackson. Is Mr. Jackson available?

Yes; please come forward and be seated at the table.

Good afternoon.

R O B E R T D. J A C K S O N: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission.

My name is Robert Jackson, and I had the privilege of serving as Mayor of Montclair for two terms, from 2012 to 2020. And I'm also a lifelong resident of that community.

I want to start by thanking the Commission for holding public meetings in several parts of the state; and also applaud your commitment and willingness to serve as members of the Commission.

I am particularly happy that you were able to have virtual meetings as we go through this public health emergency.

I'm here to encourage and to really beg, if you will, for the Commission to continue to allow public input in the entire process to ensure legitimacy. I urge the Commission to be transparent about the criteria that will be used to draw the lines of our district map.

Clearly, the map must strictly comply with the Voting Rights Act, specifically Section 2, to prohibit against voting practices and procedures, including redistricting plans, that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or membership in a language minority group. Beyond strict compliance with the VRA, there are other principles that this Commission should adopt to ensure a fair map. You can readopt New Jersey's traditional policy of anti-gerrymandering map that has a test of partisan symmetry or partisan fairness.

A good map -- and I hope that we will come up with a good map, and I believe that we will -- a good map will be one that protects minority communities from being cracked apart or packed into the minimum number of districts, as possible. A good map will also be informed by the missteps and inequities inherent in the maps of some of our sister states, particularly Ohio and Missouri.

A good map cannot dismiss the current duly elected alignment of New Jersey's current delegation.

You must ensure, ladies and gentlemen, that communities of color are not disenfranchised. I hasten to add that I am not proselytizing race politics. Montclair, over the years, and during my lifetime, has been represented -- in fact, blessed -- with powerful representation. Rodino, Minish, Roe, Frelinghuysen, and Payne Sr. come to mind. Montclair, today, is represented superbly by Representatives Sherrill and Payne. Representative Sherrill has about a third of the town, and Congressman Payne about two-thirds; and Congressman Payne happens to represent me.

That said, however, I would fight vociferously to keep Representative Sherrill as a representative of Montclair, whether she were polka dot or chartreuse. Empathy, accountability, efficiency, and responsiveness are paramount.

The Commission must ensure that communities of interest remain intact and not be cracked into several districts, diluting their voice. I urge the Commission, by its actions throughout this process, to assure voters of a fair and equitable map. A politically fair map, allowing our congressional delegation to continue its hard work in keeping our community together, is important.

Our current congressional delegation -- as I mentioned before, in the 10th and 11th Districts -- Representatives Sherrill and Payne do an outstanding job and are forceful advocates for us in Washington, D.C. When it comes to drawing the boundaries for the congressional districts, I urge you to respect the will of the voters and to develop a map that is fair to all, equitable to all, and represents New Jersey in the finest way.

Thank you very much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

And just to be sure that everyone has an opportunity -- who wishes to speak will be able to, if you have not registered, we'd like you to see the person in the back there (indicates) and fill out a form such as this (indicates), and we'll eventually get to you this afternoon.

Thank you.

Is there a Dr. Stennett, S-T-E-N-N-E-T-T, I believe; Stennett.

Pardon me; if you would use the microphone that's in the middle, that would be very helpful for us.

And for all future speakers, please utilize the microphone that is in the middle of the table.

Thank you.

You may proceed at your -- when you're ready.

A L I C I A A. B E N J A M I N - S T E N N E T T, Ph.D.: Greetings to the Chair, the Honorable John E. Wallace; Delegation Chairs, Janice Fuller and Doug Steinhardt; and members of the New Jersey Redistricting Commission.

Thank you for providing this opportunity for public testimony.

I'm Alicia Benjamin-Stennett, and I represent the New Jersey Chapters and the New Jersey Redistricting Cohort of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

As a resident of Morris Township, I am here to testify regarding three communities of interest in northern New Jersey that we have mapped. Our communities of interest maps were created in collaboration with members of the respective communities during an interactive focus group. Our research uncovered important population trends in New Jersey that need to be taken into consideration in redistricting efforts in the State.

For instance, the Brookings Institution found that “...for the first time, there was a decade-long loss in the number of white Americans who do not identify with other racial and ethnic groups. This means that all of the nation’s 2010-to-2020 growth is attributable to people of color -- those identifying as Latino or Hispanic, Black, Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Native American, and as two or more races. Together, these groups now comprise more than 40 percent of the U.S. population.”

Other census research indicates that “New Jersey is getting more and more diverse, with a number of counties ranking within the top 100 most diverse counties in the country. Middlesex County is the most diverse, according to the newly released data, followed closely by Essex County, then Hudson, Union and Mercer counties. In 2010, only one New Jersey county, Essex County, featured a population in which the largest racial or ethnic group was non-white. Essex County’s largest group of people identify as Black, the same as in 2010; but the population of Hispanic and Latino people has surpassed white people in Passaic County in 2020, a new development.

“But even in counties with a majority of people who identify as white, there is a rise in diversity. Though the largest racial and ethnic group in Bergen County remains white, the gap has shrunk significantly in the last decade. According to the census data, 53.6 percent of the population is white in 2020, as opposed to 62.5 percent in 2010.”

Additionally, race and ethnicity data “...should be carefully considered when redrawing district boundaries so as not to dilute the voting power of racial and ethnic groups. As it stands, New Jersey’s State Legislature is disproportionately white, with low representation from Asian and Latinx/Hispanic communities. New Jersey’s new districts should ensure that

these groups end up with a proportional and fair voice when allocating political power.”

To this end, the New Jersey Redistricting Cohort of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., has reviewed the results of the 2020 Census and has determined that significant increases in population in key regions in the state call for a redrawing of congressional districts consistent with maps that we’ve sent to you in advance -- which we don’t have today, but you have; we’ve downloaded it -- to ensure fair and equitable representation for the residents in those communities of interest. The communities of interest maps were drawn with the intent of district compactness, contiguity, preservation of communities of interest, with the one-person-one-vote standard, and in compliance with the Voting Rights Act.

The northernmost community in our map -- Map No. 1, colored purple -- represents what we call *Greater Paterson*. We suggest including Woodland Park -- a town that was once considered West Paterson -- Clifton, Fair Lawn, Haledon -- except for North Haledon -- and Fair Lawn eastbound to Fair Lawn Avenue, and Hawthorne north of Paterson to Diamond Bridge Avenue. These communities share movie theaters, restaurants, parks, and medical facilities. Elmwood Park, to the east of Paterson and Clifton, also uses the same services and places of worship, and the St. Joseph Hospital and Regional Center services. This map would be a plurality voting district and would allow the community to vote for candidates reflective of its concerns. As proposed, this map creates a majority-minority community.

The most eastern community that we have mapped -- No. 2, colored green -- is *Greater Newark*, containing the entirety of Newark, East Orange, Irvington, Hillside, the southern section of Maplewood bounded by

Springfield Avenue, and a segment of Harrison to the border of Central Avenue. Harrison is home to the famous Tops Diner, a vital gathering place for the Newark and Harrison communities. Newark is home to Symphony Hall and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, both of which are cornerstones of Newark and surrounding communities, and the State of New Jersey.

It is important to note that Springfield Avenue is a corridor containing a substantial portion of Black-owned businesses supported by residents of Newark and Irvington. Many of these communities share houses of worship, libraries, and parks as well. This map, as redrawn, maintains the vitality of communities that share and use the same institutions, and must remain intact to ensure that their voting power is not diluted. This map would represent a community that is 56.5 percent Black and 26.9 percent Latinx.

Our third community of interest -- No. 3, colored lavender -- represents the Black community of Montclair and the surrounding area. In this community of interest we have included the southern regions of Montclair and Bloomfield, as well as all of West Orange. To the districts in Montclair we propose adding Bloomfield and areas north to Claremont Avenue in the north, to include Mountainside Hospital. Belleville to Perry Street, Division Avenue and Joralemon Street should be included in the newly drawn map.

Although this community is spread across multiple municipalities, residents share many community institutions such as shopping and community recreation centers. In considering the mapping of this area, please take into account that Belleville and Newark share the

resources of Branchville Park and Clara Mass Medical Center. This acute care facility serves Essex, Bergen, Hudson, and Passaic counties.

Our proposed maps integrate the results of the 2020 Census with testimonials from neighborhood residents to create geographic boundaries that reflect the lived experiences and shared interests of the community. While it would have been helpful to have had the opportunity to review any maps proposed by the State Congressional Redistricting Commission as a guide, that has not been forthcoming. It has been suggested that the Commission will not begin working on their maps until January 1, 2022, well after the date of the last scheduled public hearing.

The slow speed with which the Commission makes its maps, the short notice of public hearings, and the lack of commitment to release a proposed map before the final public hearings is concerning to our cohort. We therefore would urge that when the Commission releases its proposed maps, we are given an opportunity to review them and share our feedback. To the extent we believe that the map offered by the Commission does not afford our communities fair and equitable representation, we will petition the appropriate authorities to request the scheduling of additional dates for public hearings.

We ask that the Commission commit to drafting a map that adheres to redistricting criteria, particularly relating to the Voting Rights Act and the standard of one-person, one-vote. We are confident that this body will create a map that will not be racially discriminatory and will be reflective of communities of interest.

As a nonpartisan organization, we fully expect the redistricting process to be politically fair and accurately reflect the state without a bias towards either political party.

Respectfully submitted, members of the New Jersey Redistricting Cohort and New Jersey Chapters of Delta Sigma Theta. The Cohort consists of myself, Alicia A. Benjamin-Stennett, Chair, and I'm also the New Jersey State Social Action Coordinator for our Sorority; Joyce Wilson Harley, Esq., Co-Chair; Ma'isha Aziz, Esq., Recording Secretary; Regina Carter; Sharon B. Cockey, Esq.; Rev. Dr. Marella Holmes; Felecia Johnson; Rachel Lokken, Esq.; Hope Mitchell, Esq.; Dr. Kesha Moore; Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson; Rev. Dr. Deborah Stapleton; Lisa Malloy Stephens; and Karen Upshaw-Crosby, Esq.

We thank you very much for allowing us this testimony.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

(applause)

Mayor Ras Baraka. (applause)

MAYOR RAS D. BARAKA: Good morning.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning -- afternoon.

MAYOR BARAKA: Well, afternoon, actually.

I thank the Chair and the Commission for allowing for public hearing.

Also, welcome to Newark.

I have prepared remarks; but after Mayor Jackson and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., I think I'm going to save those, (laughter) and just really -- I just really want to echo what was already stated.

I also want to agree wholeheartedly with the presentation that was just made by my sisters from Delta Sigma Theta, Inc.; from the Divine Nine. Thank you for that incredible statement that you put in on the record. So thank you for that.

I also want to say that we know there are some very specific things that we expect from the Commission, right? We expect the Commission to adhere to the Voting Rights Act, as around the country people think the Voting Rights Act doesn't exist. We don't think that in New Jersey. We believe in the Voting Rights Act, and we expect it to be adhered to as it relates to redistricting here in New Jersey.

We also expect that there will be no gerrymandering that exists, or any partisanship as it relates to creating these maps that would make it unfair and inherently unequal. New Jersey's largest city is still Newark. It is a predominantly African American and Latinx city. It has become very, very diverse over the years of people -- people of color from all over the world here in the city of Newark. We have the only majority African American District in the State here. We have a historical District, with Donald Payne, Sr., being the first African American Congressman in the State, and his son is still in that seat today.

I am concerned that we continue to make sure that that is the issue here in the City of Newark. We do not want our City to be reapportioned or divided up to make other districts and other folks stronger. We want to make sure that our District remains a predominantly majority-minority District here in the State of New Jersey. And we think that -- as a matter fact, we know that having that in New Jersey does well, not just for Newark, but also does well for cities like Montclair, cities like Belleville, cities

like -- all the cities that are around the city of Newark -- that it does well for them; but it also does well for the State of New Jersey. The issues that we think need to be put forth on the Federal side in Congress, being pushed by our Congressmen, we think that those issues are important, right for us, and represent us very well. So we want to sustain that and maintain that here in Newark.

I am a little concerned that this room is not as crowded as it should be. This should probably be standing room only in here, COVID aside. This is very, very, very important, especially since the state has grown and the City of Newark has grown more than 10 percent. In fact, the City of Newark has grown, which says a lot about what's happening in this country; but it also says a lot about what's happening in New Jersey. And it has grown, as it was stated earlier, by people of color.

And that should be taken into consideration when drawing these maps -- to make sure there's full and adequate representation of the people of this community when we create these maps, and spend a lot of attention thinking about all the resources that come to communities based on representation and how these districts are drawn. And be careful not to dilute districts to make sure that other people are successful, but that we, as African Americans and Latinx folks in this city, do not have the representation that we should have, equally and equitably, in the State of New Jersey.

That's really all that I have. I am perfectly clear that you guys are going to do your job; that you're going to make sure that you're doing it in a very fair, and equitable, and nonpartisan way. I'm convinced of that. I have faith in the Chair to make sure that that, in fact, takes place. And that

when we are discussing this, that we will be discussing it in a positive light, as it comes out in the end.

I do want to echo what was said. It would have been fair -- it would be fair to have at least some preliminary maps ahead of time to give us an opportunity to look at the thinking of the Commission beforehand, in case we want to revisit some of these discussions in public once again. Because I think this is not just a job that should be left up to a dozen people on a Commission; but it should be a job that we all struggle to make sure that we get right -- because it's incredibly important, and we have to live with it for 10 years or more.

So I think as much input as we can get is important. Not just through the public hearings, but also through the releasing of the maps early -- even if it's not the final map -- to be able to give us an opportunity to look at it and discuss it, as residents of this State, and give an opinion about what we think is right, in terms of the people who are representing us, the people of the great State of New Jersey.

Thank you, and thank you again for being in the City of Newark.
(applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you very much for your comments.

Our next speaker is Britnee Timberlake.

A S S E M B L Y W O M A N B R I T N E E N. T I M B E R L A K E:
Hello, and good afternoon--

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TIMBERLAKE: --to the members of the Commission, and all those who are here today.

I do not like to follow Mayor Ras Baraka (laughter), because he is one of the best public speakers -- an impassioned, emboldened speaker as well -- who I know.

Everything that he said is absolutely correct; as well as the Deltas (indicates). I want to just commend you for being here, too, because as the Mayor said, the room should be packed. And I loved walking in and seeing the sea of red for something like this, because this is one of the most important meetings of the year.

So thanks to the Commission for holding public meetings in several parts of the state; and also, during this public health crisis, making sure that there are virtual hearings as well. We know that access to the public -- the public being able to have access, to come to the meetings, is important to participate in these processes. So the Commission must continue to allow public input through the entire process in order to ensure legitimacy.

I ask the Commission to continue to be transparent about the criteria that the staff and experts will use to draw the lines. As you know, a map must strictly comply with the Voting Rights Act, specifically Section 2, to prohibit against voting practices and procedures, including redistricting plans, that discriminate on the basis of race, color, and membership in a language minority group.

Beyond strict compliance with the VRA, there are other principles this Commission should adopt to ensure a fair map. You can do this by adopting a policy of an anti-gerrymandering map that has a test of partisan symmetry and partisan fairness. We know that gerrymandering has worked against Black and brown communities for centuries, really, if you think of it. And it is a direct reason why you can clearly see

disenfranchisement, and disinvestment, and different resources coming into one community versus the other communities. We need representation, and we need to make sure that our voice is heard.

The test for parts of symmetry and parts of fairness was used over 40 years in the State; but for some reason, it was abandoned 10 years ago. This resulted in the last map being a 7 to 5 Republican-drawn map. And I recognize that we are nonpartisan here, but I ask that you do not compound that partisan gerrymandering and that practice, which was very partisan, by picking a map that would further enhance Republican chances to win in swing districts; which would only happen by further packing and disenfranchising Democratic voters. Although the current delegation is 10 to 2 in spite of the map, the current delegation reflects the will of the electorate to reject different candidates who don't have our voices -- particularly in Black and brown communities -- oftentimes within the Republican party. We have seen unfair maps drawn in other states, such as Ohio and Missouri, and what that has amounted to. The Commission must draw a fair and responsive map.

So I urge this Commission to draw that map that keeps communities of interest together; protects the districts that are majority-minority districts to make sure that we continue to have a voice, and we continue to have representation that understands the needs of the community, that come from within the community; and can go and get the resources that the community needs. A good map will be one that protects minority communities from being cracked apart or packed into the minimum number of districts as possible.

You must ensure that communities of color can elect people of their own choice. Having communities of color that can elect representatives

that share their interest is critical. Certain communities of interest should remain intact, and not be cracked into several districts.

So I urge the Commission, by their actions, to reassure voters of this delegation drawing fair maps. A politically fair map allowing our congressional delegation the opportunity to continue their work and keep our community together again is important. When it comes to drawing boundaries for elected officials, the will of the voters is what should be respected, and the voices of the people always.

Thank you. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much for your comments.

Jennifer Kluger, followed by Erika Fanelle.

Ms. Kluger.

JENNIFER KLUGER: Good afternoon, everyone.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good afternoon.

MS. KLUGER: My name is Jennifer Kluger. I am a resident of Basking Ridge, which is where my family and I have lived for the past 24 years.

First of all, I want you to know that I'm happy that New Jersey has a nonpartisan Redistricting Commission. I think that the public needs to believe that the map you will create is a fair one, and that all of the congressional districts within it represent New Jersey's current demographics and communities of interest.

I also want to thank you for your demonstrated commitment to transparency and accountability. Including all of us in this process is very important to the voter confidence in our system.

For many years, I have been involved in both nonpartisan and partisan voter registration and engagement efforts in Somerset County and in CD7. As you know, the voting trends in our area have changed significantly over the years, as new voters have moved into the area and others have become more civically engaged. Personally, I have seen many people, people who have never been interested in local politics, educate themselves on the issues and become advocates for their communities. They then spoke to their friends and encouraged them to become educated, and to vote, and so on, and so on.

Isn't that exactly what we want for our democracy? Ordinary citizens, educated about the issues, casting their ballots, believing that their voices will be heard. We were able to achieve this, both in Somerset County and in CD7, despite the fact that our congressional district was gerrymandered during the last redistricting in order to protect the Republican incumbent. Since then, the new and newly engaged voters have elected people who reflect their values and their needs. They understand that their representatives are working to help improve their lives by advocating for the Gateway Tunnel, or for one-seat ride, or for improved infrastructure for flood-prone zones, among other things.

I am here today to ask only that you, our nonpartisan Redistricting Commission, create a fair map for CD7 and for all of New Jersey's congressional districts. Anything else, anything that even appears as a gerrymander for the benefit of one political party over the other, will demoralize the newly engaged voters who might then opt out of the electoral process altogether. Truly fair districts drawn with this transparent process

are the only way to ensure that all of New Jersey's voters can remain confident that they, and their votes, really do matter.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.
(applause)

Erika Fanelle, followed by Ali Aljarrah.

ERIKA FANELLE: Thank you, Commissioners, for listening to us, members of the public, on this important topic.

I'm here as an individual today who hopes to shed light on the connections among the communities in which I live, work, and play, primarily those along the Morris and Essex train line: South Orange, Millburn, Maplewood, Short Hills, Summit, and New Providence.

I believe we should all be represented in one congressional District, CD7.

My name is Erika Fanelle. I'm a 20-year resident of New Jersey, and the last 18 of which I've lived in Millburn and Short Hills. I'm an active Girl Scout leader, I'm an active community and event organizer in several other organizations within my community. My children have been lucky to go to schools both in my town and also in Summit, New Jersey. They are also members of a regional arts institution, the New Jersey Youth Chorus, which was formerly known as the *Somerset Hills Children's Choir*. But it's probably best known for having sung with Queen Latifah at the Super Bowl, which was kind of cool.

All that is to say that we have deep connections to our region. Because of our activities, our best friends live in Maplewood, South Orange, Summit, and New Providence. And we have other friends throughout Union,

Morris, and Somerset counties, most of which are in CD7 -- with the exception of South Orange-Maplewood being in CD10.

I draw your attention specifically to those municipalities along that Morris-Essex train line which unites our towns in many ways. So most of us moved to that area, moved to those towns specifically because we needed to commute into New York City, right? So that's one of the train lines with a direct access into New York. We're all bedroom communities of New York, and a significant proportion of us live in households where at least one, if not two, members of the household commute in and out of the City every day. And that's the primary factor in our quality of lives -- is that commute. That's why we picked those towns.

So we all know that the current train service is notoriously infrequent and unreliable. And that's a big impact on our quality of lives -- the idea of being able to go to work, and come back and still participate in our kids' activities or in our neighborhoods and home lives.

So we bedroom community members know that the Gateway Project and other related transportation projects are vital to our quality of life and our economic prosperity. And as an intrastate project between two states, it must be funded at the Federal level by definition, and our congressional representative must fight for that project in order for our communities to continue to thrive, and live, and work as we do.

I understand that CD10 is overpopulated and CD7 is underpopulated. So wouldn't it make sense-- The question I ask is, wouldn't it make sense to add Maplewood-South Orange to CD7 to then align those interests of those bedroom communities? Since we share the same big picture

-- economic and quality of life -- requirement, I advocate we should share that one representative.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.
(applause)

Ali Aljarrah.

ROMAN BROSKOWSKI: (off mike) Chairman, Mr. Aljarrah is on his way. He'll be here within the next 20 minutes. I ask that you--

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, thank you.

Ms. Oakley, Imani Oakley.

IMANI OAKLEY, Esq.: Good afternoon to the Commission, as well as all those who decided to come today.

Six-point-six percent. Let me say that again: 6.6 percent. If the historically Black neighborhood of Montclair, New Jersey, is cut out and put into NJ11, the overall Black vote there will be worth 6.6 percent -- a *super* minority -- meaning, those folks in the historically Black district of Montclair will go from having the power of their vote be around 53 percent to having it be almost worth nothing.

It would be absolutely unacceptable and, frankly, absurd for this Commission to place that neighborhood -- that not only has similarities racially, not only has similarities culturally, but also has similarities economically-- When it comes to housing, they have similarities. And, in fact, I have actually been going around petitioning -- and at the end of my petitioning rounds I will actually submit it to the Commission -- but, most importantly, people do not want this; people do not want this. They do not

want to be placed in a district where their voting power will essentially be worth nothing.

And now, I always like to speak and move in a spirit of honesty. And, you know, one thing that always stuck out to me -- coming up, when I was a young lawyer, going through law school -- is they would say, you know, "Judges, their politics -- they leave them at the door. They don't come in, they don't sit there and judge based on their own personal politics. They just look at the situation, and look at the facts, they look at the arguments, and that's it."

Everybody in this room knows that it's absolutely not true. Even if we wanted to, it is very, very difficult to leave our biases at the door and make decisions in a way that do not take into account our politics.

So with that being said, I do want to emphasize the concern that I have around the focus on Montclair, the political insiders, the financiers, who seem to be obsessed with putting this historically Black neighborhood into a majority white district, and completely obliterating their vote; when there are other ways to draw the district that do not hurt Black voters.

And so today I want to ask the Commission, as somebody who literally has lived in Montclair my entire life -- with the exception of four years where I had to leave because, again, I have similar housing interests and economic interests with the people in that neighborhood, and I almost lost my house to foreclosure. And I had to leave and move into an apartment, when my brother moved into our house to help save our house. I have lived there the overwhelming majority of my life. And the people of that community are one, the people of that community have the same interests,

and the people of that community deserve not to have their voting power obliterated simply for political and financial games.

So again, I'm asking the Commission to make sure that they keep the south end of Montclair in NJ10, and stop playing political games.

Thank you so much. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Ms. Redwine.

E L I Z A B E T H B R E W E R R E D W I N E, Ph.D.: Good afternoon--

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good afternoon.

DR. REDWINE: --and thank you for allowing me the privilege of speaking today.

So I moved to West Orange, New Jersey, when my now-senior in high school was a baby -- from Brooklyn. And I want to echo one of the other speakers here about how one of the major reasons for our move was to make use of the train line. We're really excited about the Gateway Tunnel. So part of my argument is that we do share a community with the rest of the 11th District in West Orange.

We now have four teenagers; they all attend the public high schools in West Orange. So a second part of my argument is that the 11th District shares a commitment to going to those board of ed meetings, using our wonderful public schools. And that's the second part of my argument for the 11th as a community.

Thirdly, West Orange is-- I feel so fortunate to live there. It's an incredibly diverse town in every sense of the word. It's racially and ethnically diverse, it's socioeconomically diverse, and it's politically diverse.

We have tough conversations. Go to our next Board of Ed meeting; we have polite, but difficult, conversations. And I think that's another thing that sets the 11th apart. So it's kind of a strange argument because, basically I'm arguing that the diversity of opinion is what sets the 11th apart. But in my discussions with voters every -- you know, I've been active in trying to get out the vote -- I'm challenged, and I have difficult conversations with people, and I really appreciate that. And I think that's something that's increasingly unusual -- is to have civil and polite discussion around difficult topics, which is something I think we're really fortunate to have in West Orange and in the 11th.

I feel incredibly lucky that Representative Mikie Sherrill is my Congresswoman. And I mentioned my four teenagers-- When difficult things happen, you know, Mr. Rogers says to "look for the helpers." And so, after January 6, we showed the kids the video of Representative Sherrill talking about her actions helping to get people to safety. My brother's a Navy veteran in Maine; his whole family is really interested in Mikie Sherrill's career. So I think we really need to honor her service and not make it more difficult for voters to understand the process by-- *Sacrificing* is too strong of a word, because I know that there are really good intentions here.

So I guess I'll look at my notes and say-- My concern is adding multiple new districts at the cost of pre-existing ones. I think it's hard enough to educate voters right now. And I just remember in -- and I know no one here is-- I'm not casting any blame; it's just a difficult part of the process, and I hope this doesn't happen in the 11th. I believe it was in 2012 when I went to vote, and I thought Pascrell was going to be on the ticket, and then it was Frelinghuysen. So without even knowing, I must be in this area of

West Orange that gets redistricted, because suddenly I had new representation. And I'm a pretty educated voter, because I'm fortunate, in that that happens to be one of my interests. But if our goal is to get more people voting -- which I hope is our goal, and more people involved in the process, in the democratic process, and more people off our screens and actually voting -- I think it makes it difficult when the districts are shifting all the time. Because 2012 really wasn't that long ago.

I also think it takes time for representatives to learn their district. And I feel like Congresswoman Sherrill has done a wonderful job. I mean, I can only speak to her, because she's my Congresswoman; but she -- I'm sure this is true of other congressional representatives too -- she's done an amazing job getting to know her District. And that takes time. And so that, I think, to ask both the population and those in Congress to suddenly shift is a big ask.

So just to sum up, I would like to argue for West Orange as a part of that vibrant community of the 11th; a community obsessed with their school boards and their kids' education; and commuting on, hopefully, one day, the Gateway Tunnel, and currently on the Morris and Essex Line.

I want to point out what a role model Representative Sherrill has been, especially to young women and girls. And I do teach at Seton Hall University, and I can say that just having her as a Congresswoman has been a huge inspiration to my students on all parts of the political spectrum.

And then finally, just a pitch for -- I really respect the Commission -- a pitch for keeping these congressional districts from shifting so much that people who have really made an effort to become part of the

process don't go to vote and learn that there's a different congressional representation.

Thank you so much. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Cindy Matute-Brown, followed by Mervyn Turner.

C O U N C I L W O M A N C I N D Y M A T U T E - B R O W N :

Good afternoon.

My name is Cindy Matute-Brown, and I am here both as a constituent of Congresswoman Sherrill, but also as an elected official in the Township of West Orange.

I'm going to ask the Commission for a bit of indulgence and understanding -- that, as a first-time elected official and constituent, testifying before a Redistricting Commission and not having been coached, if you will, I may not know all the right things to say, nor the exact process. However, I felt it was my duty to come before you today.

It is imperative that we keep West Orange and Congresswoman Sherrill -- that we remain in the 11th -- to represent us in Congress, especially with the number of challenges she will be facing. We are one of her biggest challenges in the 11th, and the residents of West Orange worked really hard to elect someone who represents all of our diverse values.

We are a population of over 48,000. In terms of population, we need to ensure that equitable allocation of representation in Congress for the 11th. West Orange, like many in the 11th, has experienced some growth in its population diversity. And it is why I am here to advocate on behalf of my constituents for the fair allocation and representation in Congress. Having

fractured representation can sometimes prove to have unintended consequences, which I hope will be rectified in this redistricting process.

Congresswoman Sherrill chairs the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. Her role in representation is vital for the goals of our Governor, and Legislature, and residents as we move to ensure a greener and more environmentally sound -- and less emission contributors from our state.

Congresswoman Sherrill is on the House Committee on Education and Labor, helping to ensure the survival and sustainability of our middle class. Unions, I always believed, are schools of democracy, which are necessary for our financial stability, as they are here to ensure the protection and the rights of our labor force.

Lastly, and while as important in today's tribal culture of politics, coupled with the appalling underrepresentation of women in politics, I want to stress the importance of having a woman represent us in the 11th. Speaking personally, having run in an election for the first time, I drew inspiration, strength, and courage from Congresswoman Sherrill's campaign, and her ability to fairly and unequivocally represent all of her constituents, while maintaining fairness for all. I represent a nonpartisan community, and have been able to learn from her how to be a fair representative for all of my constituents.

I urge the Commission to please ensure that we maintain Congresswoman Sherrill, not only in the 11th, but to include all of West Orange in the 11th District as well.

Thank you. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Mervyn Turner, followed by Roy Mandelbaum.

Mr. Turner.

MERVYN TURNER, Ph.D.: Thank you, Commission members, for providing us with the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Mervyn Turner; I've been a resident of New Jersey for 36 years.

You can probably guess that I didn't grow up in the Garden State. I immigrated here in 1985; and my wife and my two daughters grew up in Westfield for our first 32 years here, and in Scotch Plains for the last four.

Abraham Lincoln said that a house divided against itself cannot stand. In the current highly polarized environment, it is more important than ever that our political boundaries are drawn fairly and equitably, and are seen as being drawn fairly and equitably. And I appreciate the work of the Commission in ensuring this is the case.

Fortunately, in New Jersey, we have a homegrown doctrine to use for foundational guidance in drawing our congressional boundaries following the 2020 Census. It is the Stokes Fairness Doctrine, promulgated in 1991 by the former Dean of the then-Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. Stokes argued that the map should reflect the State, and that the districts should be aligned with statewide margins. However, that rule was more honored in the breach than in the observance when the current district lines were drawn.

Congressional District 7 was created with the express goal of being a safe Republican seat; and so it was, until 2018, when the combination of a great candidate running an issue-driven campaign with a huge volunteer

effort to turn out the vote, produced the upset that was narrowly replicated in 2020.

I argue that it would be entirely unfair and antithetical to the Stokes Doctrine for the voters of that District to be punished by an act of reapportionment that penalizes the grassroots activism that brought them success, rather than using this opportunity to reflect the will of the voters.

For myself, I would like to see the size of the 7th Congressional District brought more into line with the remaining districts by inclusion of the townships of Scotch Plains -- where I live now -- and Fanwood. Following redistricting in 2010, Scotch Plains was split between the 7th and 12th Congressional Districts, with the boundary being the man-made obstacle of Route 22.

I would like to see these townships restored to CD7. Scotch Plains, Fanwood, and neighboring Westfield form a community of interest, whose redevelopment challenges and opportunities will be closely linked by the construction of the now-to-be-funded Gateway Tunnel project, which will give these Raritan Valley Line communities the one-seat ride to the City that has been promised for decades.

I hope that the Commission will adhere to the principles laid out by Stokes 30 years ago in meeting the challenge of producing fair and equitable congressional maps for our state.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Roy Mandelbaum, followed by Nina Ovrzyn.

Mr. Mandelbaum.

R O Y M A N D E L B A U M: Good afternoon; and thank you, Commission members, and especially the Honorable Justice Wallace, for this opportunity for me to voice my opinion here today.

My name is Roy Mandelbaum, and I live in Westfield, CD7. You are tasked with a difficult job that will impact New Jerseyites in innumerable ways for another 10 years.

I hope that each of you will use your common patriotism and belief in fair play to agree upon new district maps that will remain fair and will let the best man or woman win in order to represent the needs of their constituents.

I am a retired Medicare recipient, living in Westfield for greater than 25 years. While working in Manhattan I relied on my daily trek up the Raritan Valley train line into Newark, and then up the stairs to the PATH train, and on to the World Trade Center.

Of the 19 towns along the Raritan Valley Line, 13-and-one-half -- that is part of Union -- are in CD7. The others are split between CD9, 10, and 12. The Raritan Valley Line is often called the *forgotten line*, but we would be less forgotten if we were able to unify our voices. It would make sense for some of these towns to move into CD7 so that our concerns are not diluted.

So as mentioned, I am retired now; I have a very short commute. I'm a substitute teacher in Westfield School District. I'm not a political guru, and I don't have a lot of data points or percentages to share. But around 2016, it became apparent to me that I had to become a little more politically active in order to have my voice heard by my Congressman.

Pretty soon I realized that I lived in a so-called *safe district*; a safe district that was created by a district map, like the ones you are entrusted to

make now. That gerrymandering resulted in voter complacency in congressional elections because, I believe, voters felt that their vote didn't even matter. The old was destined to become the new with that skewed sort of district map.

Back then, CD7 was drawn to be a safe map for the incumbent, and that was supposed to be just that: a safe map.

But the voters spoke in 2018, and flipped the seat. All we ask now is that you draw the map fairly. I, along with many other Americans, still have faith in the fairness of the political systems. Please don't shred that belief, and please do find that common patriotism and that idea of fair play within yourselves that I am sure is what drew you into politics to begin with.

Thank you for your attention. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments, sir.

Nina Ovrn.

NINA OVRYN: Hello, and thank you for listening to me today.

My name is Nina Ovrn, and I'm from Westfield in the 7th Congressional District. I've lived there for nearly 23 years. My husband and I raised our three sons there; they all graduated from Westfield High School. And I don't plan on leaving my Westfield home anytime soon.

I'm here today to ask for one thing from all of you, and that is to please, please create a fair district for my neighbors and myself as you go about redistricting.

Too often in redistricting years the stories are about individual men and women. The headlines read that a new district is good for a congressman or bad for the incumbent. But redistricting was never supposed to be about individual people and the security of their careers. It was

supposed to be about making sure people, like everyone you see in this room, can have their voice heard in our Congress.

The new districts that you're drawing will have some 770,000 voices in them. And just as a fairly drawn district will result in better lives for us here in New Jersey, an unfair map made to silence some of those voices will harm us. Look at the most recent district. For the security of one man's career, it split apart the 24 municipalities in the Rahway River Watershed. It's diluted the voices of the people living there so that their representative did not need to heed them in order to stay in office. Can we truly be surprised at how little progress has been made to end the yearly floods that hit those towns?

How many hundreds of thousands of dollars were lost, how many homes flooded, and how many sentimental items lost because one man's career was favored over the voices of the people living in Rahway? To ensure that one man could assume Federal office with ease, the current map split Scotch Plains and Union in two, despite them being part of the Raritan Valley Line, along with Westfield and Cranford.

To be clear: An arbitrary line split towns apart solely to silence the voices of residents speaking out for their shared interests; voices like my own. Can anyone really act surprised that until recently, no progress was made on one-seat ride; that until recently our elected representative struggled to secure funding for the Gateway program.

The progress that's been made on the Gateway program will increase property values and drive businesses to our towns. And the lack of progress has hurt us every single day for years. How many parents spent thousands of dollars on childcare because they couldn't make it home fast

enough? Or ignoring the economic cost, how many hours were parents away from their families because of commuting times that haven't improved since the last century?

On a personal level, I'm 66 years old, and sometimes my knee acts up. It happens to the best of us, trust me. I missed my connecting train before, because of that. How many other people like me are impacted by the lack of a one-seat ride, which we should have had years ago?

You cannot operate under the illusion that the map you draw of the 7th District will only affect two people as they both try to get the same job. Instead, we must admit that it can be a fair map or an unfair one. I sincerely believe that a fair map will create better representation in Washington and improve the lives of all who live in the District.

But, if instead you decide to draw an unfair map, exclusively to benefit the career of a single person, I have one final question for you. To what extent are you willing to sacrifice the shared interests of the communities in our region in exchange for one politician's job security?

Thank you. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Laurie Saloman, followed by Ms. Duarte -- Amalia Duarte.

Laurie Saloman. (no response)

C O U N C I L W O M A N A M A L I A D U A R T E: Thank you, Judge Wallace and members of the Commission, for allowing me to speak this afternoon as part of the public testimony.

I also want to thank you for going beyond the minimum number of required meetings to gain public commentary.

So I'm Amalia Duarte; I'm a Councilwoman in Mendham Township. I'm also the Chair of the Elected Officials Caucus of the Morris County Democratic Committee. Aside from politics, I'm deeply involved in my community, and have been for many years. As a volunteer, I youth sports coach; I've served on town commissions; I'm a Trustee for the Brookside Community Church; I'm a member of the Rotary Club of the Mendhams; and a Board Member of several local nonprofits.

You have an incredibly important job ahead of you. Our country is deeply polarized. Trust and faith in our government is eroding, and sadly there is the ongoing spread of misinformation about elections, even from elected officials.

As you move forward in your work, I encourage the Commission to increase faith in our democracy by publishing the proposed maps ahead of time in order to gain additional public input and maintain the full transparency as part of this process.

I'm going to go off my notes for just a second because I could almost stop right there. To me it's clear -- that's the most important step that needs to happen. (applause)

I want to echo everything that has been said by previous speakers regarding the importance of maintaining fair districts; avoiding gerrymandering, the cracking and packing; and ensuring that communities of interest, especially people of color, have a voice. And I want to commend the previous speakers who have touched on that.

I'll just mention, as a first-generation American -- my family came here from the Dominican Republic -- I believe it is critical that

underrepresented communities have a seat at the table and their votes are not diluted.

Maps should not be drawn to give a helping hand to any one party just because they haven't had recent electoral success. They have to be fair. At the core of the democratic process is that concept of fairness. CD11 is a fair district. It's currently represented by a Democrat, Representative Mikie Sherrill; but she's proven popular across party lines. In my own Republican-dominated community -- I'm the only elected Democrat, by the way, on my Council -- Representative Sherrill has won over her Republican competitors. And the reason is, she's worked on issues that cut across party lines, such as restoring the State and local tax deduction, and fighting for funding of the Gateway project. The Gateway project is of great interest to constituents in CD11. Even though my town of Mendham Township isn't right on the train line, we are minutes away from the Morristown train station.

Communities of interest are important, and not only defined by racial-ethnic heritage, but also socioeconomic factors and many others. And it includes people who use the same public transportation networks. CD11 has an important community of interest in the workers, commuters, students, and others who rely on New Jersey Transit's trains lines. I was a commuter for many years -- first as a student, and then later working in several different jobs in New York. I can tell you when the Midtown direct service launched, it was life-changing. Having faster transportation, where I could get home in time to pick up my daughter from her aftercare program at school, was critical. And I would argue that reliable train service isn't just important for those who directly use it; it impacts small businesses located around train

hubs, and living near a train station impacts property values for all homeowners. And it also allows residents to come into New York easier for recreation.

In considering adding to the District -- because I know you need to add to CD11 -- I would suggest keeping that in mind.

Finally, I know your redistricting work does not take into account any particular candidates or elected officials, and nor should it. It's a nonpartisan effort. But please, keep in mind that, for the first time, CD11 has a woman representing us in Congress. And we all know women in public office are still the exception. We have only two women out of our 14 representatives in Congress. And at the local level, it is just as bad. A 2021 nationwide study, that was completed by the Center for American Women in Politics, found women underrepresented at the local level across the country. Here in New Jersey they looked at municipalities of 10,000 residents or more. Only 29 percent of local seats were held by women. So men had 70 percent.

Many women, like myself, became involved in politics for the first time during the 2016 presidential campaign, and we grew even more committed afterward. Grassroots groups fueled by the engagement of women demanded to be heard and worked tirelessly to elect leaders who listened and promised to work on their behalf. I was part of the wave of women who decided to run for office in 2017. I participated as an elected official in a number of nonpartisan forums aimed at inspiring girls to think about politics as a future. Several years ago, I spoke at Girls State, and I was on the podium with Governor Christine Todd Whitman. This fall, I participated in what was called *Voter Girl Project*, sponsored by the Girl Scouts of Northern New

Jersey and the State League of Women Voters. I spoke alongside a Republican Assemblywoman, a Republican County Clerk, a Democratic County Commissioner, and local officials of both parties.

Representation matters. I have seen the wide-eyed excitement in young girls when they see women standing in front of them talking about why they decided to run for public office, what it's like serving their constituents, and how they're making a difference in their communities. While I know you cannot create maps to favor women, I hope you keep in mind that we have only two women -- Representative Sherrill, and Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman in the 12th District -- serving us in Congress. These two women are not just hardworking and exceptional; they are inspirational role models to girls and women across our state.

Thank you so much for listening to my testimony. I hope you will consider it as you make decisions in the coming weeks.

Thank you so much. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Andrew Smythe, followed by Roman Broszkowski.

Andrew Smythe.

A N D R E W S M Y T H E: Good afternoon.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I just want to clarify, throughout my testimony when I refer to NJ11, that's New Jersey's 11th Congressional District at the Federal level; and NJ10 will be New Jersey's 10th Congressional District at the Federal level as well. I just wanted to clarify (indiscernible).

My name is Andrew Smyth, and I am a constituent of NJ11. I'm here to speak out against the redistricting attempts to transfer areas of

Montclair from NJ10 to NJ11. The constituents of Montclair in NJ10 should not be dismissed or be utilized for political gain.

Representation in the United States of America means something. NJ10 is the only majority Black U.S. district in New Jersey. And as a result, the representation of NJ10 is determined by a majority Black voting block. If the south end and the 4th Ward of Montclair were to transfer from NJ10 to NJ11, Black constituents from these areas would lose their voting influence. As a tiny minority of voters in NJ11, a majority white District, Black voters would see their interests ignored and overwhelmed.

This is atrocious, because as I said, representation in the United States of America means something. Representation is more than just being elected by a district or a state. Representation is fighting for the interests of your district and having the lived experience to understand what your constituents need.

Compared to our majority Caucasian voting demographic as a country, Black American citizens disproportionately are less likely to have health insurance, or disproportionately going to have more student loan debt, and are more targeted by a broken criminal justice system. A majority Black district that has lived through these systemic inequities has the ability to elect a representative who understands the inequities that they have lived through. Losing that power is a detriment to the values of democracy.

As a constituent of NJ11, and an individual involved in political discourse and activism, I know this District at a statistical level and at a personal level. This is a battleground District between Democrats and Republicans. It is also a voting base that does not live through the same economic and racial inequity that many constituents of NJ10 lived through.

Our Representative, Mikie Sherrill, is a blue dog Democrat, who pushes for many policies that Republican Congress people and their donors would support. This is influenced not only by the makeup of this District, but it's also just a reflection of how the lived experience is not the same as that of NJ10.

For the purposes of maintaining our values of representative democracy, you must allow Black constituents of NJ10 to maintain the power they have as participants in a representative democracy. Transferring them into a different district not only deters their voting power as a district, but it will disenfranchise constituents who are losing their power as a majority block. We must be cautious and empathetic to the needs of constituents in this country, and guarantee that they can elect the necessary representation that they deserve.

Thank you. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Roman Broszkowski.

MR. BROSZKOWSKI: Mr. Chairman, before I begin, I mentioned before that Mr. Aljarrah was on his way. He has arrived, so I just wanted to point that out.

Hello, Chairman and Commission. My name is Roman Broszkowski; I'm a lifetime resident of New Jersey, and someone who is very proud to live in this state and be a part of this community.

I'm reading testimony today from two people who could not be here, unfortunately: Ms. Linda Lis and Mr. Jacob Smullyan. They have already submitted their testimony in written form, and I am just going to present it on their behalf.

So first, I would like to present Ms. Linda Lis' testimony.

"Hello, and good afternoon.

"My name is Linda Lis, and I have decided to present my testimony today as a resident of Montclair, and to voice my firm opposition to the current proposal to push all of Montclair into the 11th Congressional District.

"New Jersey is an incredibly diverse state, but the diversity is not represented in our political leaders. All three leaders of our State government are white men, more than half of our Congress people are white, and only two elected officials here at the Federal level are women.

"New Jersey citizens of color deserve accurate representation. Moving parts of Montclair into the 11th District would deprive voters of color of that chance at representation by completely diluting their electoral power. Currently, Black and brown voters make up the majority of the 10th District and are able to act as a community of interest. By taking parts of Montclair out of the 10th this Commission will be taking apart working-class Black communities and attaching them to vastly different populations.

"The proposed Montclair redistricting will be unrepresentative of the issues communities of color face, and it is rooted in the historically racist attitudes New Jersey politicians have held about Black voters. Simply put, this is New Jersey's political machine acting like it always does -- trying to protect politically entrenched incumbents at the expense of communities of color and progressive organizers.

"I'm sorry that white incumbents are vulnerable. Maybe they should spend their time in office doing something worth our votes instead of manipulating the maps to save themselves.

“Voters of color are not political pawns to be used as vote spigots. I urge the Commission to keep southern Montclair in the 10th District, and to remain dedicated to accurate representation for all of New Jersey residents.”

And now I would like to present testimony from Mr. Smullyan.

“Hello, I am Jacob Smullyan--

JUSTICE WALLACE: Excuse me, sir. I didn’t get that last name.

MR. BROSZKOWSKI: Smullyan; S-M-U-L-L-Y-A-N.

“Hello, I am Jacob Smullyan, a current Montclair resident, on Claremont Avenue, in what is now the 10th Congressional District.

“I offer this testimony to voice my opposition to current proposals to push all of Montclair into the 11th Congressional District.

“New Jersey is a state of enormous diversity that also suffers from enormous divisions along racial, ethnic, and class lines. This gives rise to a local political struggle that tends to lead to the disenfranchisement of the least powerful, especially people of color. In the highlighting of that racial theme, let’s not overlook that, however deep its roots, the immediate cause of this disenfranchisement is a lack of money. Because money talks, and, unfortunately, it seems like that’s the only kind of talk power listens to.

“Tossing a significantly Black and working-class neighborhood into a purple political race helps the Democratic contender, to be sure. But it does not help elect someone who truly represents the constituency of that neighborhood. They’ll vote Democratic, it is presumed, because the alternative is unthinkable. But their representative will fundamentally be answerable to the most influential voices in that constituency: the polished,

upper middle-class residents of Upper Montclair, who do not need to know what they pay for their organic produce at Whole Foods. (laughter)

“Meanwhile, the perspective of those who will, perforce, end up going without genuine representation, remains deeply meaningful and essential -- not just for their own future, but for everyone else’s. They see what my lovely friends uptown do not need to see; and indeed, would rather not. We need their voices, and we need them represented in Congress in full measure.

“There are other ways to put out any potential fire in the 11th Congressional District, such as by moving Glen Ridge or parts of Maplewood from the 10th into the 11th. Using the south end and environs of Montclair this way to bolster the chances of a middle-of-the-road Democrat would, with essentially different interests, be a betrayal of our community and of ourselves.

“I urge the Commission to keep southern Montclair in the 10th District, and to remain dedicated to accurate representation for all New Jersey residents.

“Thank you.” (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you, sir, for your comments.

And sir, would you be kind enough to go to the back room and complete a form for the individuals you spoke for?

MR. BROSZKOWSKI: Sure.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much.

Devon Jiang, followed by Marietta Carter.

D E V O N J I A N G: Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Commission.

My name is Devon Jiang.

I would like to note that throughout these hearings, few individuals have come to speak from the 12th Congressional District. So I decided to testify again, as a constituent from that District.

There is a reason for this, though, besides the fact that I had to take a one-hour NJ Transit train that was, of course, delayed.

The 12th District is rated as D+16, which means that, in almost every single election, the same people win. And that aspect is not to say that any of our representatives are bad; but instead, there is no reason for us to actively participate in politics if we know the outcome.

Meanwhile, in New Jersey's 5th District, voters feel as if their votes matter. In addition, their Representative, Josh Gottheimer, heavily influenced legislation in the House. This example of leadership and accountability reverberates throughout the rest of this state -- from Northern Jersey, to Central Jersey, to Southern Jersey. By the way, I know I am in North Jersey territory, but Central Jersey is totally real; and I would like to put that in the record. (laughter)

Another example, though, is in the 2018 election, which saw Representative Andy Kim replace former Representative Tom MacArthur -- not because Mr. MacArthur was a Republican, but rather because he rebelled against his constituents by attempting to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

This engagement by both the public and their representatives are recognizable on a large scale because of competitive seats. Swing district members have an incentive to explain themselves and show proof that they represent their constituents. They are the solution to the lack of discussion and compromise in Washington. Currently, the increase in polarization

means that representatives score more political points by spewing rhetoric than doing work. Even something as bipartisan as infrastructure took years to pass in Congress because of political shenanigans. Much of this stonewalling is because many representatives know they will win their re-elections no matter what. Consequently, congressional members from safe districts typically represent their caucus leadership, rather than their people.

The people of New Jersey aren't the only individuals who want competitive districts. Even representatives who have campaigned in competitive environments advocate for it. I spoke with State Senator Kip Bateman about this issue, and he concurred that competition benefits everyone in New Jersey, including the public servants. He stressed that being a representative is about serving constituents, which in this present day is more likely to be done by representatives in contentious districts.

Many New Jerseyans are frustrated at the stalling occurring in Congress, and much of these roadblocks are put up by highly partisan representatives looking to score brownie points. Imagine, for example, if Mr. Wallace was a social media influencer whose sole life mission was to create political drama. We can all agree that these tropes are not fit for Congress. However, we have those types of people in Congress who disrupt progress for the sake of political gain.

Competitive districts, in addition to making every vote matter, bar the potential for these occurrences.

Look, I recognize that lobbyists exist to have the potential for a reactive gerrymander to become a reality in New Jersey, especially with new maps in states like Texas and Ohio. Competition, though, can benefit both parties that are on this Commission. The 2021 election has shown how

individuals in competitive boundaries got down to work. In Virginia, a competitive state, we saw how the Republican Party replaced individuals who failed to represent Virginians. For the Democrats, I acknowledge that there are incentives for gerrymandering, but look at our current delegation. Josh Gottheimer led the push to pass the bipartisan infrastructure bill; Andrew Zwicker focused on local matters. One member on this Commission, named Vin Gopal, won re-election because he valued the views of his constituents over the thoughts of his bosses. Without individuals who have incentives to legislate, we could very well expect many safe Democrats to fall in the same void as Mr. Sweeney in 2021.

To the members of this distinguished Commission: We must not subvert ourselves to the gerrymandered and uncompetitive maps of today's decade of redistricting. Most New Jerseyans want this Commission to maintain competitive districts, and that is an opinion that should take importance in deliberations. After all, you are sitting on this Commission because We the People endorsed a process influenced by public input. Therefore, let us elect representatives who act in the best interests of our populations. Let us have competitive districts that favor all parties on this Commission. Let us feel like our votes matter; let us become galvanized to be part of New Jersey politics. These goals aren't political kumbaya. Maintaining majority-minority districts, as previous speakers said, is fair. It's not political kumbaya. Having competitive districts is fair; it's real life, shown by some of our own New Jerseyans. Gerrymandering this State and following the status quo of making more parties and districts is easy, yet it will tarnish our delegation into nothing more like boring Indiana.

So on behalf of the citizens of New Jersey, and the 12th Congressional District, we implore you to make New Jersey's maps an imprimatur of competitiveness.

Thank you, and I yield to Honorable Chair Wallace. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Marietta Carter.

M A R I E T T A C A R T E R: Good afternoon.

I thank you, Justice Wallace and members of the Commission, for your time and commitment to the important responsibility of redrawing congressional districts based on the 2020 Census results. I thank you for holding these public forums to give New Jersey constituencies and community leaders the opportunity to share important backgrounds about their communities of interest. I know I've learned a great deal by listening to the testimony, and I hope this testimony will guide you in drawing districts that best benefit the people of New Jersey.

My name is Marietta Carter. I grew up in Virginia and came to New Jersey for a job after college, to work as a systems engineer in the telecommunications industry. Since September 1988, I've lived in Basking Ridge, Bridgewater, and Branchburg; so I've always lived in Somerset County and been represented in the 7th Congressional District.

I've raised two sons who were educated in the Branchburg and Somerville school systems, Raritan Valley Community College, and Rutgers University. I currently work as a substitute teacher, which allows me time to pursue other interests, among them trying to save democracy. Yes, I fear our democracy is in danger.

Brennan Center for Justice reported that, since the beginning of the year, 17 states have enacted 28 new laws restricting the ability to vote. The redistricting process in Texas and in Ohio have both yielded maps that break up Black communities, resulting in loss of representation.

I am proud to live in a state that has improved voting rights for its citizens, while the trend is going in the other direction in other states. In recent years, New Jerseyans implemented automatic voter registration, online voter registration, and early voting; has introduced drop boxes, and restored the right to vote to parolees. And these public hearings so that people can give input into redistricting decisions are also an important improvement in the democratic process.

I personally feel compelled to testify because I want to be sure that any changes to my District are made in the best interest of its communities. I think that CD7 should be largely kept intact, while adding some similar communities, as needed, to rebalance the numbers. Others have made recommendations for how to do that. I am only here to argue that we should not dismantle communities we already have in the District. People in our District commute into the City using the Morris and Essex Lines and the Raritan Valley Line, and will benefit from the Gateway Tunnel. So it makes sense to keep these towns along these Lines together.

Additionally, and unfortunately, our District has problems with flooding of the Raritan and Passaic rivers, and it benefits us to be represented together for issues related to storm recovery and addressing climate change.

Less specific to my own District, I'm a member of League of Women Voters, and I urge you to support the Fair District New Jersey mapping principles that state the following.

One, maps should be drawn with racial equity. The 2020 Census shows that there has been a growth in communities of colors, and this should be reflected in the new maps. Two, new maps should preserve communities of interest to the largest extent possible; and three, districts should not be drawn to favor any political party.

I applaud the Redistricting Commission for agreeing to hold 10 hearings to accommodate public input beyond the constitutional minimum of three. I'm asking you to strongly consider sharing draft congressional maps when available, and scheduling additional hearings after they are shared to allow opportunity for public input on the maps.

Thank you, again, for allowing me to speak to you today. I ask that you honor the enormous responsibility to you to draw a strong map that prioritizes fairness, racial equity, and representative democracy.

Thank you. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Allen Swanson, followed by Cory Garriga.

Mr. Swanson.

A L L E N S W A N S O N: Good afternoon.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good afternoon.

MR. SWANSON: I'd like to begin by joining in with all those who are commending you for the time that you're putting into this, and listening to all of us who are coming to present before you. I appreciate it a great deal.

I want to talk to you about the principles and values that make our democracy such an effective system of governing. Our democracy is built, in part, on the principles of transparency, accountability, equity, equal

opportunity, and fairness. It's the principle of *fairness* I wanted to discuss today.

Over the 230 years since our Constitution was signed, we've redefined *fairness* a number of times. When we saw that it was inappropriate for women not to be able to vote -- it wasn't fair -- we allowed them to vote. When we saw that people of color were not being represented adequately, we passed voting rights laws. When we saw that 18-year-olds were being sent to fight in Vietnam for us, we thought it was unjust and unfair that they weren't allowed to vote, and we gave them the vote.

Right now, we face a crisis in our democracy. That crisis is the disillusionment, the apathy, the lack of participation in our democratic process. In 2020, we reveled at the turnout in that presidential election year. Yet, 80 million of registered voters did not participate; 80 million. Those people who do not vote -- usually more than half of registered voters cite many reasons for their decisions not to participate -- at the core of their reasons are the perception that the system is simply not fair.

When we hear in the news about making a district safe, it does nothing to dissuade the feeling that their vote simply does not matter.

Fairness means every voter has a sense that their vote does matter. In so-called *safe districts*, where the votes frequently don't matter, there's no democracy. It leads to candidates avoiding debates, avoiding issues. It creates a situation where the primary election is the election that determines who the representatives are.

One criteria-- The criteria you're charged to take into account in your decision are primarily compactness, contiguity, preservation of political subdivisions, and many others that have been mentioned here today. These

would appear to lead toward fairness. One criteria that is frequently mentioned is -- and it has been today -- competitiveness. The problem with the use of competitiveness is that it requires that you consider the voting history, the registration data, and other partisan factors. And when those factors are applied to district maps is when we move into the area of gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is the enemy of fairness and equal opportunity. And honestly, how can we judge what is competitive when 50 percent of the people who are registered to vote don't participate.

In New Jersey there have been districts that have been created using criteria that took partisan politics into consideration. In those districts, for example the one I live in -- District 7, which has been mentioned today -- hard-working, dedicated people have overcome the partisan boundaries and selected the candidates of their choice -- in the 7th, and then other, districts. Those hard-working citizens created districts on their own that are fair.

I ask that you not consider partisan political priorities in any of your district boundary decisions. Every voter needs to go to the polls believing that their vote is meaningful, and that the person who they want to represent them has a fair chance to be elected. That's how we generate interest; that's how we get those 50 percent who are not participating to participate.

And once again, I want to commend you. I think that your task is just monumentally responsible. And I very much appreciate how much you have -- the time that you have put into this. And it's obvious by looking at you that you're committed to this process, and I have a great deal of faith that you're going to go forward and make this a fair process.

I thank you for listening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you very much for your comments. (applause)

I have a group of individuals who wish to speak one after the other, beginning with Henal Patel.

PHILIP HENSLEY: We hope to testify about a map proposal. So I ask the Commission's permission to display a map.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Yes, you may do so.

MR. HENSLEY: Thank you.

HENAL PATEL, Esq.: So while that's happening, I'll just note-- So this one map we're facing this way (indicates)-- We have two copies, one will face that way (indicates), so the audience-- And hopefully they can -- some can be viewed through the live stream. But it is the same map.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Have you also included this on our website?

MS. PATEL: Yes; we will be submitting this, actually officially, to you. This is just a visual for while we discuss it today.

I will also note -- I do have-- I did not make a dozen copies, you know, keeping in mind the trees. But I did make three copies of different district data. So if anyone wants it, we can share that as well.

So good afternoon, and thank you to this Commission for having this public hearing, and for giving us the opportunity to testify.

I will echo some of the things that have already been discussed today, including gratitude that this Commission has been holding more hearings than you are not only required by the Constitution, but have been held in the past. We do appreciate it.

Today is the eighth public hearing; tomorrow is the last scheduled one, and the ninth. I believe you announced that you will be holding 10. We are hoping that last one you're holding onto to show us your maps -- echoing some of the things that were mentioned by the Deltas behind me and Mayor Baraka -- that if you can share your maps at a public hearing I think would benefit the public broadly.

As we discuss today's map, I will just note my name is Henal Patel. I am the Director of the Democracy and Justice Program at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. We're a racial and social justice legal advocacy organization.

We're here to testify in support of a map that we've drawn with our racial justice advocacy partners, some of whom you're going to hear from in just a few moments, including Latino Action Network and the League of Women Voters of New Jersey. The Institute is also a member of the United Black Agenda, which is a group of organizations focused on Black communities in the State of New Jersey. We worked with them to come together to create this map.

The purpose of redistricting is to ensure that we have a government that is representative of the people. It's the foundation of our democracy, our form of government. At its core, redistricting is about power.

Now, we truly do appreciate how difficult drawing a map is. This is not a puzzle that we can all work together to solve; no right answer in the front of the box. As you are all well aware, redistricting is about balancing a number of criteria, some legally required; and coming up with a map that best represents the criteria you prioritize.

So this map we present today meets the equal protection requirements established by the Supreme Court -- established by Supreme Court precedent. No district is above 0.25 deviation in this map. I will note -- so as we do this, and as Chairman Wallace mentioned, we are going to be submitting this map officially on your website. That will be a shapefile that can be inputted into Maptitude. This picture (indicates) is actually from *Dave's Redistricting*; it's actually just easier to visually display that way. But it is -- the actual data is more useful to you on that purpose.

So first, we did prioritize -- as we have to in all redistricting -- equal population. We also met other-- All the districts are also contiguous, as legally required.

Following those requirements, the Institute and our partners prioritized racial equity and communities of interest. We drew, as required under the VRA, a majority Black district; that's District 10. We used-- I want to take a second and note here -- the demographic we used was *all parts Black*. In the census there are different criteria of how people self-identify. We urge this Commission to use that same criteria. While race is a social construct and complicated, for purposes of redistricting we must rely on how people self-identified in the census. As such, we should include everyone who self-identified in some way as Black or African American in the state, particularly in a state as diverse as ours with such a significant Afro-Latino population.

In our District 10, the Black voting-age population is 52.5 percent. While we do not recommend using the voting-age population for all metrics, as many communities of color have younger populations, we

understand they are necessary for our majority Black and majority Hispanic districts under current law.

Our Hispanic majority VRA district is District 8, the current one, also my home district. And just like in the-- It has a voting-age population of 51.8 percent Hispanic.

But beyond that, it's crucial to remember that racial equity includes not just meeting the bare requirements of the VRA, but going beyond them. In the past, this Commission has not met that challenge. In 2010, the congressional map that was certified included only three districts drawn to be a majority of people of color. So we had the majority Black district, we had the majority Hispanic district, and we had one more district, District 9, that was, together, a plurality district -- a majority of people of color district. And that was it.

So in 2011, in a state that was, at that time, over 40 percent people of color, 75 percent of the districts were drawn to be majority white.

That is what we are trying to address today. Historic underrepresentation that persistently happened, cycle after cycle. Now, today, when the state is over 48 percent people of color, this Commission must not let that happen again; particularly, as was noted earlier, when all of the population growth in the state came from people of color. People of color made up the deficit of white communities that have been losing population, and then contributed to the growth.

In accordance with this principle, we have drawn a map that includes six majority of people of color districts; so half the districts in the state. Given the large and growing Hispanic population in New Jersey -- 22 percent of the current population -- the Commission should draw District 9

as we have it. That is a plurality Hispanic district, where they make up the largest demographic in that district.

Also, given the growing Asian population in New Jersey -- currently 10 percent of the state, and the fastest-growing demographic in the state -- the Commission should draw two Asian-influence districts. So we have that in CD6 and CD11. And I will go through a little bit from district to district; we also have our partners who are going to discuss this map.

We also wanted to note -- District 12, Congressional District, which grew into a majority people of color district in the last decade -- it was drawn majority white -- it has grown into one in the current lines. We need to maintain that and respect that, and should maintain significant Black and Hispanic populations so that they may continue to have influence in that district.

So as we go through this a little bit, and we talk about racial equity, I've mentioned, so far, the demographics as they are from the census. Those are all the same data that you have used. But what we've urged the Commission to do from the beginning, and what we try to do ourselves, is also listen to the public. Communities of interest are crucial here. It is -- they tell us so much more than what the data does. They tell us what it means to be someone. I am Asian American, I am from CD8, I live in Hudson County. There's a difference from where I live, my neighborhood, than someone who is also Asian American and lives in Livingston, who's Asian American and might live in Plainsboro. There's a difference between being Black in Newark, being Black in Maplewood, and being Black in Salem City. Those things matter, and they come up in communities of interest that we hear from, from the public.

So in that lens, as we drew those districts, we kept in mind communities of interest that we collected through our outreach, through work with so many of our partners, including the NAACP and their local chapter; Salvation and Social Justice, and faith organizations in the state; the Divine Nine organizations, including the Deltas behind us; as well as other communities led by people of color throughout the state. We urge you to do the same, and to take that into mind when you're drawing your districts.

So I'll go a little bit here and try to -- without taking up too much time -- and I will allow-- Our partners will discuss more, but District 1-- I'll start in the south and work our way up, just so I don't show my North Jersey bias (laughter). So District 1 here (indicates) that we have -- we wanted to note that this District, which has long been anchored by Camden, continues to be so in the map we drew. It also takes into account -- goes down and has Salem in it. That is a district we drew with the local NAACP State Chapter. And then crucially, from data and the community map we received from the Deltas, a community of interest we received from the ground that included Camden, Pennsauken, and parts of Merchantville, and we cut them in that same district.

We also received feedback from students at Rowan University, urging the Commission and the State of New Jersey to keep them in District 1, where they feel they have more in common than pushing them into District 2.

Moving to District 2 -- we received feedback from our Hispanic and Latino partners who said Vineland, Merchantville, and Bridgeton should be kept together. They have significant Hispanic populations, and they should not be divided. This map maintains that.

Going up to District 3 -- we heard from people locally that District 3, in many ways, currently is a suburban district, at least around the Philadelphia area. There are diverse suburbs here (indicates). And in some ways they do not share that much in interest going all the way to the Shore. So this district keeps that in mind, and keeps it more as a suburban district -- Philadelphia suburban district -- but also a Camden suburban district, but focused around Burlington County.

Our District 4 -- we received some feedback that we should try to maintain Brick to be intact. And this does so over here (indicates).

As we go forward up, I'm just going to-- As we all know, as everyone is aware, our numbers kind of shift; and District 5 is all the way in North Jersey. But I'm just going to continue moving northward and talk about District 6 and District 12.

District 6 -- we received some interesting feedback here. So in District 6, and as you know, there has been testimony to this Commission that people in Neptune City and Neptune would like to be included back with Asbury Park, and maintain the same district as Long Branch. So we did do that, and we went down and grabbed all of those so that they are in those same districts. We also heard from partners, especially in the Latino population, that they felt that they would share more of an interest with the people in Perth Amboy. So that's why District 6 looks as it does here (indicates).

District 6, however, as many of you know, has a significant Asian population; and we kept that in mind as an Asian-influenced district. Our District 6, in this map, includes Plainsboro, West Windsor, all the way

through Edison and Woodbridge. So you have a district here where the Asian population is 26.7 percent, an actual influence district.

Meanwhile, District 12, that goes over here (indicates) -- we've received a decent amount of feedback on this district from various community members. One, there's a great interest in keeping Trenton as the seat of this district. But we also heard from communities, namely the NAACP Greater New Brunswick Chapter, that told us that, right now, their Chapter, their community, is split between two districts; that they feel that their community of New Brunswick, Franklin Township, and Highland Park should be in the same district, keeping in mind that New Brunswick should also be in the same district as Piscataway, because that is the Rutgers campus there. So we did that by putting all of those towns in District 6. This also puts Rutgers in the same district as Princeton, and TCNJ, and Rider. So you have a district that allows for college students to have a community of interest.

We also spoke to people on the ground in Plainfield. Now, Plainfield, as you all know, is basically the northernmost part of the current 12th District. We asked them what they felt. Would they feel more comfortable moving in another District, possibly a more competitive one? And local leaders there -- members of the NAACP, members of local groups, specifically Black communities there -- said that they do not wish to be put in a majority white district. They do not think that meets their -- that that would serve their best interests. So keeping that in mind, and listening to them, they remain in our District 12.

As we move up, our District 7 is a competitive district as drawn here, and maintains a lot of those things that we've been hearing -- as you've

been hearing here as well -- that people in this district wish to stay in a competitive district, and this allows them to do so.

Now, coming into this broader area for District-- I'll come back to District 8 in a moment; I'll do District 10 and 11 now.

This District, first and foremost -- since we have heard a great deal about this today -- we'll note that this keeps the historic Black parts of Newark in District 10. We've heard some of the same testimony you have; we've heard that from community outreach. We spoke to the local NAACP Chapter there, and other groups, and they felt strongly that their interests -- the Black community there is served by being in that VRA majority Black district, and not being drawn in with the rest of District 11. So we respected that, and kept them in District 10; as well as keeping in mind a community of interest map that was shared with us from the Deltas, that told us some more about this area and what they felt was their community in Montclair -- which includes Bloomfield and parts of West Orange -- and we've tried to maintain that together as well.

Our District 11 looks different than the current District 11. It is drawn to be a majority people of color district. Once again, I state that the State is not only over 48 percent people of color, I'll note that with the realities of census undercount, we are probably already a majority of people of color State. (applause) So it makes sense to draw a map that reflects that, especially because of historic underrepresentation of these communities. So we have a sixth majority people of color district; our District 11 over here (indicates) does that, and is the other district that is an Asian-influenced district, where the Asian population would be over 22 percent. It captures the areas around Livingston, Parsippany, East Hanover; and also swoops into

-- in an admittedly not the most attractive, but still legally permissible district that goes into Jersey City, because it prioritizes racial equity.

Now, moving forward to Districts 8 and 9, which are key in addressing the significant Hispanic population in the State. As I mentioned, District 8 is a majority Hispanic district as it currently is, and should remain, with its seat being in Hudson County. District 9, however, accounts for the significant growth of the Hispanic population, and as I mentioned would be a plurality district for the Hispanic population, where they are the largest demographic. In our map, they are over 40 percent of the population.

And then, finally, District 5 in the north looks about similar to what it currently is, and it remains a competitive district.

As I said, we have our partners who are going to discuss this a little bit more. And we have a great deal of data that we will share with all of you, including submitting -- we do plan to share with you the maps we received from the community so you can see what we did.

As we draw this, I just wanted to make clear here that the Census data is clear. We are at a cusp in New Jersey's history. People of color are poised to represent much more significant power than they have in the past. And we have seen across the country, as so many people have mentioned, that other states have responded to this change with intense assaults on the voting rights of Black people and people of color, and the use of gerrymandering in an attempt to diminish and stunt their political power in the future.

New Jersey has an incredible opportunity here to serve as a national bright light by drawing its democracy in a way that captures a majority people of color population.

And one last thing I will mention on this map.

As we've discussed in the past, in some ways, and have had -- the advocacy groups have made clear in many different conversations how we see partisan fairness metrics. They're important. Partisan gerrymandering should not be permissible. It creates significant challenges for our democracy. However, as was mentioned by a gentleman a little while ago, when you draw a district keeping partisanship in mind, you inevitably end up creating gerrymandering, but also come up against other criteria. Instead, what we recommend -- as do the national advocacy, some of whom have testified before you; The Brennan Center for Justice, Asian Americans Advancing Justice -- that the way to do this is to prioritize racial equity, communities of interest. And then, as a back-end, check the partisan fairness metrics. We did the same. This is an acceptable level; these are acceptable levels when we do partisan metric tests in the various tests that are out there.

It's critical to do it in that way because the reality is, in order to draw just competitive districts all over the place, or just safe districts all over the place, you are going to inevitably end up dividing or packing communities of color. So it is -- we urge you to draw a map as we did. As we submit this map, we hope you carefully consider it as a whole, but also in individual pieces we put together; the communities we lifted up and the priorities we took into place, so that when you draw a map, you prioritize the same.

Thank you. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, thank you.

Philip Hensley.

MR. HENSLEY: Good afternoon, Chairman Wallace and members of the Commission.

My name is Phillip Hensley. I'm here on behalf of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey to present testimony on this congressional map that Henal laid out for you.

We're submitting this map for consideration to this Commission, and I want to describe a little bit -- build on what she has said to describe the principles that guided the creation of this map, of the process that produced it, the specific districts that were drawn, and conclude with a request for this Commission.

When I testified at this Commission's first hearing, I outlined the fair mapping principles the League of Women Voters of New Jersey have endorsed. We've heard some of those fair mapping principles reiterated today already; specifically, I outlined three criteria that we believe should govern redistricting.

First, it should be no surprise to you, given this map -- racial equity. Racial equity is a key concern for the League, we believe, in reinforcing the principles of the Voting Rights Act and ensuring that New Jersey's communities of color have an equal opportunity to participate in the political process. Second, redistricting should preserve communities of interest to the greatest extent possible. And third, we support an anti-gerrymandering principle that district plans should not favor or disfavor any officeholder, candidate, or political party.

So those were the principles that guided us in designing this map. This map was not produced by any one person, by any one organization; but reflects input from a wide array of statewide and national organizations that share our mapping principles. We collaborated with partners at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, Latino Action Network, the New Jersey

Alliance for Immigrant Justice, the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Fair Share Housing Center, Salvation and Social Justice, the Deltas, and many other organizations to draw a map that reflects the increased diversity of this State, and promote the ability of New Jersey's Black, Latino, and Asian communities to participate in the political process.

Our organizations gathered feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders and community partners. We conducted community mapping sessions and identified communities of interest in every part of the state, which we used to inform those mapmaking decisions. Henal has already laid out some of them for you today.

Any map-drawing exercise must begin with the census. And the Census results show that New Jersey is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Latino populations grew by 29 percent, and Asian populations grew by an astounding 44 percent. Overall, New Jersey was found to be 52 percent white and 48 percent Hispanic, Black, Asian Native American, Pacific Islander. We know that due to systemic census undercounts, New Jersey's communities of color are, in reality, an even larger share of the population; likely, 50 percent or more.

Accordingly, this map creates 6 majority-minority districts out of 12, one more than the current 5.

This map preserves the 8th and the 10th Districts as majority Hispanic and Black districts, respectively, following the requirements of the Voting Rights Act. And this map has four additional districts that are majority non-white by total population. Those are the 6th, the 9th, 11th, and 12th Districts that Henal described to you. I'm going to talk a little bit more in detail about some of those districts.

So the 9th District, centered on Paterson, is a strong Hispanic opportunity district, in which the Hispanic population is the plurality, representing 40.9 percent of the total population. So over the course of the coming decade, that share will surely grow. This District provides the Latino population with a significant opportunity to elect the candidate of its choice in combination with other groups, and to increase Latino representation in Congress in the future in line with this group's significant and growing share of New Jersey's population.

The Asian American-Pacific Islander population was the fastest growing demographic in New Jersey over the past decade. Asian and Asian American populations in New Jersey now represent over a million people. This map includes two Asian-influenced districts, the 6th and the 11th, in order to ensure the Asian American communities are fairly represented.

The 6th District connects Asian population centers in Mercer and Middlesex counties to create our first Asian-influenced district. This Commission has heard testimony from the public at previous hearings about the importance of creating such a district, and what doing so would mean for that community's ability to have its interest represented. This District has a total Asian population of 26.7 percent. In addition, this District keeps significant Latino and Black populations in Long Branch, Asbury, Neptune, Neptune City, Belmar, and neighboring areas together, which is important as they constitute a community of interest. And including them together in this District allows for their effective representation. We prioritized keeping these areas together following community feedback from our partners at the Latino Coalition; and because doing so is in accordance with public testimony

that has been given to this Commission from a number of groups and individuals from that part of Monmouth County.

The second Asian-influenced district in our map is the 11th District. And this District combines an Asian America population center in North Jersey together in one district, including Livingston, parts of Jersey City, and parts of Bergen County.

The 11th District also draws Morristown and Dover together in the same district, because we had community input gathered from our partner organizations that those two communities would share so much in common and should be kept together in one single congressional district.

Finally, the 12th District on our map is a minority coalition district in Central Jersey. Following community feedback that Henal described, the communities of New Brunswick, Highland Park, Piscataway, and Franklin Township were kept together in one district, as they constitute a community of interest with substantial Black and Hispanic populations, joining them with a district that includes Trenton and Plainfield.

Each of these six districts -- the 6th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th -- all have a non-white majority, which we believe best reflects the increased growth among New Jersey's communities of color over the past decade. This map promotes racial equity and the ability of all New Jersey's communities to have a voice in the political process.

So Commissioners, here's our map (indicates). We've outlined the process and the principles that have guided us, and we'll be submitting the map to the Commission's website so you'll be able to go in, in detail, and look at it.

My question for you, Commissioners, is, where is your map? The League of Women Voters has long advocated -- and you've heard it again today -- that redistricting prioritizes public engagement. The public deserves an opportunity to consider your map proposals before they are certified. This Commission will have held nine hearings as of tomorrow. I strongly urge the Commission to publicly release your draft map, or maps; and then schedule your 10th hearing to receive public testimony on those maps so that you can integrate public feedback into the final map that will determine whether all of New Jersey's communities receive the representation and resources they deserve.

This map is an exercise in representation that's going to happen for the State over the next 10 years. And I know all of you as Commissioners, and all of your staff, have worked incredibly hard. Adding additional opportunities for public feedback and public commentary I know might seem like an extra delay, extra work. But the people of New Jersey deserve this response from this Commission, they deserve the opportunity to offer this feedback. The fact that you've heard it, again and again, today, from Mayor Ras Baraka, from so many other speakers, I think testifies that this is something the Commission absolutely must do.

The purpose of redistricting is to redraw districts to account for population shifts. Because New Jersey's population growth has been concentrated among New Jersey's communities of color, fair representation requires that new districts should be drawn to reflect that fact. This map does that. Which is why it has received broad support from a range of organizations representing New Jersey's communities of color.

We ask that this Commission give this map serious consideration, and present your own maps to the public before a final vote.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

C H R I S T I A N E S T E V E Z: Good afternoon.

And again, my name is Christian Estevez, and I'm the President of the Latino Action Network. And I'm also a first-generation American, whose parents immigrated here from the Dominican Republic. So I'm the second one today, who I know of, with that particular makeup.

Good afternoon, Judge Wallace, Chairperson Steinhardt and Chairperson Fuller, and all the distinguished members of this Redistricting Commission. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to again address you and for taking the time to listen to all of our residents as you consider the map that you'll be drawing since it will have such a big impact on the representation that New Jersey's diverse community will have in our nation's capital.

The Latino Action Network has been really hard at work for the past several months -- along with our allies in the struggle for racial, social, and economic justice -- to come up with a map that includes the fair representation of New Jersey's communities of color. This includes community education sessions throughout the state and community mapping. And this is what we found.

First, looking at the data -- as you're all aware of, but I really need to drill down on this -- New Jersey's population is now almost 50 percent people of color, if not more given the undercount, as has been mentioned. It's time for our congressional representation to reflect that diversity.

In the Hispanic population -- the Hispanic population went up from 1.5 million to 1.8 million. The Black population also went up; the Asian population also went up. The white population went down, not just in percent, but in real numbers, from 5.3 million to 4.8 million.

Latino communities, and other communities of color, face unique challenges in New Jersey, a State with some of the worst racial disparities in the country across almost all indicators, including of well-being, including housing, health, education, and wealth, to name a few.

I'm here today to say that the Latino Action Network supports this racial equity map that was just presented. While individual groups could draw ideal districts in a vacuum -- we could draw a Latino district that even gets our numbers higher in some places -- Latino numbers higher -- we don't do this in a vacuum. We know -- we understand that we're not working in a vacuum and that we must work together to come up with a map that gives all of us an opportunity to rise together.

The racial equity map prioritizes communities of color by creating six majority-minority districts in what we call District 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. District 8 is a Latino-majority district, and District 10 is a Black-majority district. The other four districts are people of color coalition districts, including Districts 10 and 11, which both have large Asian populations.

Our District 8 is over 50 percent Latino, with 53.8 percent Latino total population, and 51.8 percent Latino voting-age population. And as was said earlier, while we're not saying that every district needs to be looked at in terms of the voting-age population, for the purpose of District 8

being a VRA district -- the Voting Rights Act district -- we made sure that the numbers hit there for that purpose.

And I'm going over, first, what the Latino majority areas are. Our Congressional District 9 is a majority-minority district with a Latino plurality of -- it's over 50 percent minority overall; the Latino population is 40.9 percent, making Latinos the single largest group. Whites are the overall minority in the district, and are behind Latinos in total population, at just 37.9 percent.

In Congressional District 12 -- which is a third majority-minority district with a Latino plurality -- this district is over 50 percent total minority; Latinos make up 23.8 percent and is the single largest minority group in there, but whites continue to be the overall biggest group with 42.1 percent.

Latinos will also continue to have significant influence in the other three majority-minority districts -- in CD6, CD10, CD11 -- making up 20 percent, 20.3 percent, and 20.9 percent, respectively. And I just want to point out -- and it was also said in other testimony -- that in this map, our CD10 keeps those parts of Montclair in CD10, as has been told to us by the community.

Latinos continue to be represented in the remaining congressional districts, as follows, in this map: In CD1, 14.9 percent Latino; CD2, 17.5 percent Latino; CD3, 9.5 percent Latino; CD4, 10.6 percent Latino; CD5, 11.5 percent Latino; and CD7, 15 percent Latino. So therefore, we did not pack Latinos all into a few places to make this point. Latinos continue to have significant representation in all the districts. We tend to be more represented in the northern districts because that's where the Latinos tend -- our population is, and that's where most of the Latino growth has

happened. But we also make sure that Latinos continue to be represented in the other places as well.

So we need to do all this because Latinos continue to be underrepresented in Congress and at the State level. And I've talked about, in my previous testimony, the consequences of underrepresentation of communities of color and how that contributes to very big disparities. So I'm not going to go over that again.

I want to stress the importance of a fair process, that we echo with what other people have said in terms of drawing districts that respect our communities of interest, ensuring that communities of colors are not packed or cracked so that our voice is not diluted and our vote is not diluted. This racial equity map is a clear demonstration that this Commission can draw a map that maximizes the number of majority-minority districts, while not diluting our voice in other parts of the state. Maximizing the voices of people of color in every district is important because it enhances our ability to fully participate in the democratic process, having an increased ability to elect candidates of our choice.

And I want to be clear. Electing candidates of our choice does not mean that Latinos are going to get a Latino congressperson or Blacks are going to get a Black-- You know, it's really about having the opportunity to listen to all the candidates who are running, talking to them about what our interests are, getting them to listen to us, and then electing those people who we think are going to be more likely to represent our interests. And in many cases, that's somebody outside of your own group. And we've seen that even in the current delegation, where we've seen certain reps who, while

they're not from my group, have been very attentive to Latinos; or if they're not Black, but they're attentive to the Black community, and so on.

And, of course, our delegates of color do not ignore white constituents. They care about all of their constituents. So we want to make sure that we elevate the ability and the power of people of color to have a significant voice in who gets elected.

We need every member of New Jersey's congressional delegation to take the needs of our State's people of color seriously, and to fight for us as vigorously as they do for the rest of their constituents. A fair map gives people of color a strong voice in every New Jersey district. The racial equity map presented today gives New Jersey people of color that voice. This is why the Latino Action Network wholeheartedly supports the racial equity map, and we urge the members of this Commission to take what is presented in this map very seriously, as it is very well thought out, balanced, and fair.

And we also echo the call for a hearing after the Commission comes up with its own maps so that the community has an opportunity to provide feedback on those maps.

And for that, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. And as always, I stand always available to any member of the Commission -- our organization -- to talk to you about the map, the Latino interests in this map in more detail; whether you want to know about how certain communities within this map-- Because we can go on and on. I know that I can speak for hours about this; I often put people to sleep. I tell them if they want to -- if they're having a hard time going to sleep at night, call me up. I will give you a redistricting lullaby. (laughter)

But still, we'll be very happy to break this down even further with any member of the Commission.

Thank you. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Cory Garriga.

C O R Y G A R R I G A: Good morning.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good afternoon.

MR. GARRIGA: I just need to echo what was said previously, especially by Ms. Patel.

One of the things I do is give presentations on redistricting -- what the process is on both sides of the situation, congressional and State. In preparing for that, I came across something -- that the Census Bureau made a statement; that they reworded the questions on race and ethnicity. That definitely means, in the last few redistricting cycles, minorities were underrepresented.

So I'm just going to go into my statement here, focusing more on my community of District 10.

My name is Cory Garriga. I was born and raised in Jersey City, and still live in that area, and in District 10.

I'm here with my friends at the Latino Action Network and the Fair Redistricting Coalition to testify about communities of interest in my hometown District.

District 10 currently comprises portions of Essex, Hudson, and Union counties. Now, there have been many changes in Jersey City with the influx of community members who have relocated from all over the country and settling here to call this area home. And while this is diversifying our

community, I believe that it is important to preserve District 10 as a majority-minority congressional district. My father, who is of Puerto Rican descent from the state side, and my mother, who was an immigrant from Guyana -- I was raised in a family that believed in civic engagement and participation in politics, and watched both of my parents run and work in local elections.

As a person of color, I am in support of the racial equity map because it prioritizes the interests of Black and brown communities, and continues to allow opportunities for people, like my parents and myself, to participate in the politics of their respective community.

Now, I mentioned that Jersey City has been diversifying because of gentrification. However, many of those have relocated to this area to seek out medical and community services in New York and, therefore, are not fully invested in our local institutions. This has caused a huge gap for many residents.

If District 10 is preserved as a majority-minority district, we can work towards ensuring that we have representatives that prioritize additional resources for this specific community, such as Garden State Episcopal, and PACO, and various other community-based organizations. These organizations lie within these towns and are used by communities of color. These community organizations provide aid to Latinos and other communities of interest by aiding in housing assistance, utility and rental payments, health programs, and many other resources for these communities of interest. These organizations alleviate burdens families face while gentrification is growing. Having a map that accurately reflects the community aid will aid in providing additional resources to these programs that I mentioned.

So with that said, I just want to thank you all for your time in allowing the public to speak here. And we definitely want to echo what everyone else is saying -- you guys definitely need to come together and release the maps ahead of time so we can look at it and make comments, all right?

And that's all. Thank you for your time. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, thank you for your comments.

Mark Comesañas. (no response)

Mark Comesañas? (no response)

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: I think he had to go.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Next.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Michael Evangelista.

M I C H A E L E V A N G E L I S T A: Members of the Redistricting Commission, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Michael Evangelista. I currently live in the Township of Nutley, which is in the easternmost portion of the current CD11. However, we share many characteristics and, therefore, constituent issues with the District as a whole.

In redrawing the District lines, the Commission should keep in mind the nature of the constituencies. And I'm generally a man of few words, so I'll keep with that policy today.

In creating larger geographic districts, which merge urban and suburban communities with different needs, you could dilute the vote of majority-minority communities, create districts with competing constituent

needs and issues, and result in districts which ignore physical boundaries and other considerations.

Now, in the years past, CD11 has had representation that was unresponsive to its constituents. I'll spare you the details, but if you know anything about NJ11th for Change, you'll know the situation that we had.

I've worked long hours with many other residents of CD11 in the electoral process, and we now have a representative who's responsive to the needs of our District. They've earned the trust and respect of the community, and we want to maintain that situation.

So I would ask that you maintain, to the greatest extent possible, the current boundaries of District 11.

And I would also echo the statement of many of the speakers here today -- that you release your preliminary maps and provide an opportunity for the public to comment on those maps.

And again, thank you for your work, and for the opportunity to speak here today.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, thank you for your comments, sir. (applause)

Thank you very much.

And if the group that placed the placards on the table -- if they would like to remove them, they may do so at this time.

Laura Morowitz. (no response)

Laura Morowitz? (no response)

Sara Cullinane.

SARA CULLINANE, Esq.: Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Sara Cullinane. I'm the Director of Make the Road New Jersey. Our mission is to build the power of immigrant and working-class communities to achieve dignity and respect, and we do that through community organizing, through the provision of legal and support services, transformative education, and policy innovation.

In the past year we've reached out to more than 200,000 voters of color here in New Jersey for one-on-one conversations; and have reached 15,000 people, through our civic engagement and legal services, who are Latinx and immigrant community members.

We're a statewide organization, and our membership and client base are focused and concentrated in our hubs in Elizabeth, Passaic, Perth Amboy, and New York.

And today we're here to speak in support of the racial equity map that was just introduced by our partners at The Institute, and the Latino Action Network, and the Fair Redistricting Coalition.

We know that New Jersey has seen rapid and extraordinary growth in the communities of color over the past 10 years. And the census -- which we know to be an undercount, given our work on the front lines engaging Latinx communities, immigrant communities in the count -- even though it's an undercount, it reflects that communities of color comprise nearly 50 percent of the population in New Jersey.

And as others have mentioned in previous testimony, population growth in New Jersey is driven by people of color, in particular by Latinx community members. And, in particular, over the past 10 years, New Jersey's Latinx and Hispanic populations have grown by nearly half a million people, or 29 percentage points. And that's incredible growth. And we know here in

New Jersey that our diversity is our strength, but too often it often represents horrifying disparities.

During the pandemic, nowhere has the loss of life and economic collapse been experienced more than by Black and Latinx community members, in particular for our working-class people. And we know that the pandemic itself has capped off more than a decade of worsening economic and racial inequality in our state and across the country.

So it's all the more important that our maps reflect the new realities and the growing majority of people of color in our state, and that we must have fair representation. We support the racial equity map because it creates majority people of color districts in District 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. And we believe that the communities of interest must -- and, in particular, communities of color must have the power to be able to elect people to Congress who will represent their interests.

We thank you so much for the opportunity to testify. Members of our organization will continue to testify tomorrow, and in the next hearing. And we also urge the Commission to release public versions of your maps with an opportunity for public comment.

Thank you so much. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Diane Dresdale.

D I A N E D R E S D A L E, Esq.: Good afternoon, Commissioners.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good afternoon.

MS. DRESDALE: I want to say I'm very impressed by the speakers here today.

And so I know you guys have been here a long time. I'm going to keep this really short and to the point, on some basic principles that are really very important to me.

First of all, I thank you for holding these hearings, and I really appreciate the opportunity for the public to come in and speak. Obviously, the hearings are critically important.

So my name is Diane Dresdale. I am a resident of Summit, New Jersey; I've lived there for over 20 years. I have three children, I'm an attorney, and I'm a very engaged citizen. I volunteer at the State level, as well as my local level.

I also have engaged heavily in gun violence prevention legislation and other issues -- so that you know that.

In any event, I'm here today just to relay my great concern that in New Jersey our congressional districts be drawn fairly. It's often stated that voters are to select their elected representatives, not the other way around. It's stating the obvious, right? The elected representatives should not be selecting their voters, but it's happening; and we know it's happening in other parts of the country.

In other words, districts should not be gerrymandered to fit the desires of either party. This is the essence of our democracy because it ensures that everyone's vote counts. It also ensures that voters have confidence in our voting system. Poll after poll of the United States electorate reflect an ever-increasing loss of confidence in our voting system and that our voting system is fair. This is particularly true -- as I understand it, in the news last week -- with regard to young voters, who are obviously our future. That our democracy works for all is being questioned. At this

tumultuous, intense time in our country, it could not be more important that the redistricting process in New Jersey and across the country be done with placing fairness and, with that, transparency.

And so I'm going to reiterate -- please, that you release the proposed maps so the public can review and have comment on it. But that should be your priority.

Now, I'm in District 7; it's one of the most affluent in the country. And it's my understanding that our District is *overpopulated* by -- if that's the term -- approximately 14,000 people. Obviously, when we're looking at bringing in more population, it's fairness, again, that dictates. And for me, one of the most important things is what's been spoken of today -- that whatever redistricting you do, that we consider the disenfranchised communities of color, and we do not -- we make sure we hear their voices. I don't know how that affects my District, exactly; but I know that that's important to me, as a voter.

Community of interest is also important. I've been very grateful that my current Representative has focused in on infrastructure. And finally, we're getting -- due to his work, as well as, obviously, many others; but certainly, he's had a large part of it -- we're finally getting funding and focus on the train line -- which I have experienced way too often sitting in Penn Station -- among other infrastructure projects.

In sum, I respectfully submit, Commissioners, that in taking on this serious task of redistricting, fairness and transparency be the guide; that gerrymandering in favor of any one party, or even in certain instances one candidate, be steadfastly avoided. How districts are drawn this year will have a direct impact on voters confidence in representative government. Our

democracy is fragile; we all know it -- at least I hope we do. We must do everything in our power to protect it.

Thank you. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Mark Lurinsky.

MARK LURINSKY: Thank you, Judge Wallace and the members of the Redistricting Commission, for the chance to speak to you again.

I am Mark Lurinsky, and I'm a member of BlueWave New Jersey.

I have two issues I'd like to discuss today: our State and my community of Montclair.

I'm sure most people in this room are aware of the harmful practice of racial and political gerrymandering that has plagued this country for a long time. The failure of the U.S. Supreme Court to act against gerrymandering and the recent blockade in the U.S. Senate against legislation that would address this issue nationally, set up a free-for-all in various states to create more heavily gerrymandered maps for the next 10 years. This puts a great responsibility on commissions like this one.

In New Jersey, we also currently have a gerrymandered map; but it's not what some folks may think. When New Jersey had its last congressional redistricting Commission a decade ago, the Chairman selected a Republican-leaning map.

The 2012 elections that followed with the redrawn districts resulted in one less seat for Democrats, and our delegation to Congress became a 6-6 split, despite more heavy support for Democrats in our State's presidential voting.

The gerrymandered nature of this map, which still exists, is apparent by looking at the Cook Political Report's Partisan Voting Index. Five of our congressional districts -- the 1st, the 8th, the 9th, the 10th, and the 12th -- are currently packed districts. This means that the voters of one partisan lean, the Democrats in our State, are so concentrated together that their votes have no impact on the overall allocation of seats around the State.

Two of these districts, the 10th and the 8th, centered in Newark and Jersey City respectively, voted 83 percent and 74 percent for the Democratic congressional candidates in 2020. Such packing of voters in our urban areas limits the political power of our historically underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities.

The 2020 Census has also shown that the population of those two Districts grew much more than other areas of the State. So in the new map, it's urgent that the degree of packing in such districts be remedied to not dilute the power of these voters.

Of course, we all know that in 2018, popular Democratic candidates successfully challenged incumbent Republicans in several suburban districts, where swing voters rallied around healthcare and other issues to support change. The Commission needs to recognize that this current 10 Democrat, 2 Republican split in the makeup of our delegation was not because of the 2012 map, but in spite of that 2012 map.

As political opinions change, and new candidates emerge, the swing vote could easily shift in another direction. In my opinion, it's not the proper role of the Commission to engineer new maps to support any party or candidate; and certainly not to give additionally secured districts to a party just because it had lost an election or two.

Turning now to my local Township of Montclair, where I've lived for 32 years-- Not to boast, but in a number of ways it's a unique place. We are well-known for our diversity, more or less alone among the New York City suburbs. We have a magnet school system, in which children from across the community attend our seven elementary and three middle schools according to their individual interests and needs, and not because of the neighborhood they live in. This system started in 1977 as a voluntary desegregation plan to address racially separate housing patterns. Such a system requires increased spending for school buses and other enhancements, which means there is a special need for support by our State, and also in our national education policy. To the degree that this program is a success, it can also be a national model.

We have an extremely vibrant arts community, including our increasingly prominent jazz, film, and literary festivals, available to all our residents and attracting folks for miles around. Arts in our community, and our country, need special support also to be maintained.

Our citizens are disproportionately active on any range of social issues, including gun violence, climate, healthcare, and social justice. The massive peaceful outpouring of several thousands of our residents from all areas of town in last summer's protests, demanding equitable policing in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, is just one example of where our united voice has mattered.

Unfortunately, our town is currently split between the 10th District and the 11th District. In the 2012 map, the District lines were redrawn in a way that made no particular sense, except for partisan interests. No less than other towns, we should have the opportunity in the new map to

be united as a recognized community of interest, where a single member of Congress, who is intimately familiar with us and our needs, can represent us.

I can't say how this should best happen, and I don't come here to advocate for any particular map for our town. But I believe it would be in the interest of the people of our town and our State to have us in one district, going forward.

Thank you for your consideration. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments, sir.

Al Witcher.

AL - T A R I Q W I T C H E R: Good afternoon.

My name is Al-Tariq Witcher, and I'm a lifelong resident of Newark. I recently moved to East Brunswick.

I want to thank the Commission for allowing me the opportunity to comment.

I'm going to keep this short and sweet. I'm here on behalf of the Returning Citizens Support Group of Essex County. I'm formerly justice-impacted; I served over 20 years in prison. And I've been home 10 years now; and since I've been home, I've been working to be a part of the solution, because I was once part of the problem.

I'm here in support of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice's map that they presented here today. I think that that map actually did all of your work for you. I think that you can go home and relax at this point. (applause) And basically, that map explains -- does all of your work for you.

I really appreciate this opportunity, and I hope that you really work towards presenting a racially equitable map. And I hope that you hold

the 10th hearing so that people will have a chance to comment on the map that you do present. And I just appreciate this opportunity.

And Justice Wallace, I followed your career. I was a *jailhouse attorney*, or jailhouse paralegal lawyer; and I've always admired you and your work, and I've read many of your opinions.

And I thank you all so much for giving me this opportunity to speak.

Thank you so much. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments, sir.

Now, that completes the list that I have. I may have missed someone. I know I've called names that were not present.

Is there anyone here who is registered who wishes to make an additional comment?

Ali H. Aljarrah? Yes, I called your name earlier.

Please come forward.

A L I H. A L J A R R A H: I guess you guys save the best for last, hopefully.

All right; well, good afternoon.

My name is Ali Aljarrah, and I'm a former Little Falls resident and a proud New Jerseyan.

I come here today with my testimony to shed light regarding the redistricting of the 10th and 11th Congressional Districts.

I am speaking today to oppose any move by this Commission to push all of Montclair entirely into the 11th. My testimony today reflects the importance of community representation on the congressional level, and how

this redistricting process could hurt constituents currently living in the 10th District.

As an Arab and as a Muslim growing up as a middle-class kid in North Jersey, I never had a Representative who looked like me or shared the same perspective, especially when it came to the struggles of being an Arab and Muslim in a post-9/11 world.

This is important when it comes to the creation of policy and policy decision-making -- when my former Congressman voted for the authorization of the Iraq War, which resulted in the death of my uncle and created a chaotic environment for my family members who are still living in the country.

Now today, I'm not asking for the Redistricting Commission to create a district for someone who shares the same background as me. But rather, I'm asking for the Commission to empathize with the constituents who don't share the same background as the rest of the District; and by that effect, the congressional representatives.

For example, affordable housing is an important issue for Montclair residents living in the 10th Congressional District where they are majority renters; whereas residents living in the 11th Congressional District are majority homeowners. The 11th is one of the wealthiest Districts in the entire country. Additionally, factoring in race makes it apparent that working-class Black and brown communities, living in the 10th District, would have different interests than the overwhelming upper middle class white residents living in the 11th District. And as a young person of color who lived in the 11th District, I can affirm the disparities have an effect on which issues take priority during a congressional race. I've often felt

unrepresented in the areas such as reform and social justice, student loan forgiveness, and the plight of Palestinians. Because the 11th is overwhelmingly white, the interests of communities of color are not taken into account.

I hope my testimony today gives the Commission a reason to oppose moving the entirety of Montclair into the 11th District.

Thank you, Commissioners, for allowing me to voice my perspective.

Please enjoy your day. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

I think I have another speaker.

Pastor Bartley.

REVEREND STEFFIE BARTLEY, Sr., D.Min.: Good afternoon; sorry for my lateness, my tardiness.

My name is Pastor Steffie Bartley. I am the Northeast Regional Director, under the leadership of Reverend Al Sharpton. I cover New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

I'm so sorry that I'm late. I just received a phone call from Reverend Sharpton that I just needed to come over and make it known on record that I am present, and I will be there tomorrow to give my testimony.

And I am so sorry that I'm late. I know you all have been here all day. And so, Your Honor, I just wanted to go on the record that the National Action Network is here, and we're concerned about redistricting and the other things that really are going to affect our community.

Thank you; God bless you. (applause)

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right; thank you, Pastor Bartley. We look forward to your testimony tomorrow.

DR. BARTLEY: Thank you, sir.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Now, is there anyone else who I have not included who is present today? (no response)

All right; I thank you again for appearing this afternoon. It's been a long session. I hope everyone is able to leave safely and return to your neighborhoods.

I thank you. We have a lot of work ahead of us, and we'll again meet tomorrow, virtually at 6 p.m. It's a virtual meeting at 6 p.m. tomorrow.

Thank you, and good day. (applause)

(MEETING CONCLUDED)