



Sonya Redd

Somerset, NJ 08873

REDISTRICTING TESTIMONY

Good morning, my name is Sonya Redd. I live and worship in what is called the greater New Brunswick area. Living off of Route 27 in Franklin Twp, referred to often as the New Brunswick/Princeton Corridor. I've lived in this area for 42 years, including Kendall Park, North Brunswick and 25 years Franklin Twp. I am here to testify about the important features of my community.

My community is quite diverse, a real blend of Black, Brown and white peoples. A perfect blend of what our nation will look like. My place of worship is one of the largest Baptist Churches in the area. Most of the members are from Somerset, Middlesex and Mercer Counties. Most of the old families of the church are uniquely connected to the other black churches in the Greater New Brunswick Area.

Our community is bordered by Route 287, Route 22, Route 1 and Route 27 runs through the middle along with the Raritan River. It encompasses Rutgers University, Princeton University, Rider University, Middlesex County and Raritan County Colleges, Robert Wood Johnson Hospital, New Brunswick, Robert Wood Johnson Hospital, Somerville, St. Peters Hospital, Princeton Medical & Princeton Hospital.

My community includes Franklin High School from which 2 of my grandchildren have graduated and one is currently attending, South Brunswick HS from where my son graduated, New Brunswick H. S. where my daughter-in-law graduated and currently teaches, North Brunswick from where my nephew graduated and Rutgers University from where my son and daughter-in-law both graduated. My community includes Hillsborough and Princeton where some of my doctor and grandchildren's doctors are located. My community includes Cranbury, NJ where I spent the last 20 years of my corporate career working. We, of course enjoy the theaters and fine restaurants in New Brunswick.

My community includes portions of every county in the 12th Congressional District and is in the 17th Legislative District.

I am very pleased with both the Congressional and Legislative Districts that make up my community. We have made great strides with interracial relations, interfaith relations, police relationships with the community have improved greatly. We are grateful to our now not so new Somerset County Prosecutor. Also, even though on paper it would appear that Franklin Twp and New Brunswick are separate towns, the people on both sides come together to help each other. When I leave here today, I am going to a prayer vigil in New Brunswick even though I live in Franklin Twp. This is not new, churches from both towns are connected, the people are connected. We have in the past prayed together for our community and will continue.

Please do not make any changes to our districts.

Thank you for extending me this opportunity to testify.

Rev. Sonya Redd



Written Testimony of Devon Jiang
New Jersey Redistricting Commission
Hearing on the Establishment of New Congressional Districts in New Jersey
Saturday, November 13, 2021
10:00 A.M.

I would like to thank the chair for allowing a high schooler from West Windsor to testify.

44% describes the Asian American growth in New Jersey over the past ten years. In 2010, there were 725,726 New Jerseyans who identified as Asian. Today, more than 1.05 million New Jerseyans are Asian. The growth of this coalition is undeniable, especially right here in the Asian paradise known as Edison. In 2019, the Asian population percentage of this municipality was 48.7%, up from 43.19% in 2010 and 29.27% in 2000. This exponential increase is seen throughout the entire Northeast Corridor. Somerset County had nearly a 60% increase between 2010 and 2019, resulting in more than 62,000 of the 328,000 individuals identifying as Asian American. In Mercer County, the Asian population rose from 32,752 to 52,733. In 2018, this state saw the election of the first Asian American Congressman in its delegation. This redistricting commission, though, ought to cement these gains by, at the very least, adding an Asian-influence district.

There is no better example of why Asian Americans should have an influence district than the rise of Hispanic Americans between 2000 and 2010. Based on the 2020 Census, 18.8% of New Jerseyans were Asian. In the 2010 Census, Hispanics and Latinos comprised 15.2% of New Jersey's population. That commission's iteration produced a map that gave a majority-Hispanic/Latino district in Hudson County. The same story seen one decade ago exists, in the same way, today, but with Asian Americans. For decades, Asians have been ignored in politics and left to the dust. As a result, while 5.9% of Americans are Asian, only 16 out of the 435 districts, or 3.7% of the US House, are represented by Asians. This commission can do better by securing an Asian-influence district.

Now, why should New Jersey suddenly care about us? We are less engaged in politics than most other races and supposedly a less critical group. Frankly, it is surprising that I am here today. It is surprising that the son of immigrants from China is engaging in American politics of all places. It is a stereotype that Asian Americans are a model minority, that we work hard to make Goldman Sachs money. The truth is, though, like every American, we have our day-to-day

problems. The truth is, most Asians in America are not making six figures. And yet, this assumption that we do not need any help blocks us from participating in politics. The lack of Asians in New Jersey politics is a reflection of outdated maps that ignore our voice. However, that does not mean that we don't want to influence the New Jersey Congressional delegation. Andy Kim's presence rejects that assumption. His presence energized Asian Americans to vote in New Jersey's third Congressional district. In 2021, Asian Americans actively campaigned for Sadaf Jaffer in the 16th Legislative District. Heck, Cory Booker, who is not Asian, received nearly \$400,000 of campaign contributions from Asian Democrats in the 2020 Presidential primary. Congressman Kim and incoming Assemblywoman Jaffer are inspirations to many New Jerseyans Asians. In particular, Mr. Kim was part of why I believed that a son of Asian immigrants could belong into the sphere of American politics. Many of the members of this commission, especially minorities, recognize how effective representation is to their faith in government. Many of you know the feeling of representation because someone who looks like you knows your issues.

Representation increases participation by everyone, not just those who have power and privilege. A New Jersey where adults from every racial background vote in tandem is a better democratic system. A New Jersey that ushers in the growth of Asian Americans is not only welcomed but necessary. It is only fair for this commission to implement a map that considers New Jersey's diversity and recognizes Asian Americans. A district that extends from Burlington to West Windsor to Edison is advantageous for everyone. Asian Americans in New Jersey would finally have a dependable voice, turnout in every election would increase, and neither party would have to sacrifice their districts. I get that operatives want this commission to shore up districts, and Camden Democrats don't like New Jersey's 1st Congressional District to be jeopardized. An Asian-influence district, though, does not cause the Democrats to lose the first district, it does not reject Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman's constituents, and it does not make Congressman Malinowski's seat any more or less competitive. That said, by neglecting to add an Asian-influence district, this commission threatens the hopes of rising second-generation Asian Americans who are interested in advocating for a better New Jersey. This commission would fail its goal of establishing districts that accurately represent this garden of diversity. Therefore, on behalf of Asian-American New Jerseyans and the municipality of West Windsor, I implore this committee to serve justice to the Asian American community by adding an Asian-influence district.

November 10, 2021

Members of the Redistricting Commission:

First, I'd like to thank you for your service on this important commission.

My name is Judi Knott and I am from Summit, New Jersey. I grew up on Long Island in a small town called St. James. I have had a long interest in democracy, having been a political science major at SUNY Albany. I was raised Roman Catholic and I am godmother to three amazing nieces. I am a volunteer with SHIELD, a service which shopped for seniors during the height of the COVID epidemic, and I continue to shop for a couple who live in Senior Housing in Summit. I am a member of Summit Marches On and Summit Area Indivisible where I have volunteered my time combatting voter disengagement and voter suppression through postcard efforts, phone banking, and canvassing. I am also a marketing professional with over 30 years of marketing experience, primarily in the publishing industry.

In the 22 plus years that we have lived in Summit, NJ, we have seen a growing shift in the diversity of our community. We have seen Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/South Asian, and LGBTQ persons move to Summit. We are a mix of many different cultures and faiths. These growing numbers of individuals and families represent a shift in demographics that cannot and should not be denied. To ignore these constituents would be doing a disservice to our community and would marginalize a growing number of citizens who need representation.

Our district is already competitive. We are advocating for keeping our district intact and allowing us to compete fairly.

I am asking that you take into consideration our shared values before making any redistricting decisions, and before redrawing this district.

Judi Knott

Summit, NJ

Dhruv Dalal

Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920

Hello,

First, I'd like to thank the entire New Jersey Congressional Redistricting Commission for the ability to provide testimony. As a citizen of New Jersey for the last 17 years, I am proud of our state for giving us the opportunity to participate in the political process, rather than hiding the process behind closed doors. My name is Dhruv Dalal, and I am currently a resident of Basking Ridge, New Jersey, and, accordingly, live in the current 7th congressional district of New Jersey.

I would like to ask three major considerations for the redistricting committee as they go about the process of drawing the boundaries that will determine our democracy for the next ten years.

First, I would like to repeat on what the representative from the League of Women Voters mentioned last week. In order to provide transparency, I strongly urge that the committee allow the public to submit maps on the website for the Commission. Additionally I would urge that the committee enable the public to use available software to develop these maps. Most softwares for decoding the Geographical Information Systems (GIS) data that the Census provides are proprietary and accordingly present costs. Many free renderers and mapmaking tools are unwieldy and may be incompatible with the data that the Census provides.

Secondly, I would like to recommend that the committee blind itself to the current homes of representatives. The act of considering the habitations of current officeholders in redistricting plans places the lawmakers and legislators above the people that they are responsible for representing. This defeats the principle of democracy and law that no person can be above justice. Deliberately avoiding "double bunking" legislators often results in maps that are unresponsive to the New Jersey public. Additionally attempting to maintain a correspondence where each legislator is 'given' a particular district results in unwieldy district lines that break apart neighborhoods and communities of interest. This often results in districts that dilute Black voting power, or concentrate power in white urban area. Our representatives should represent New Jersey in all characters, from our beautiful cities, to our grassy suburbs, to our forested wilderness.

Lastly, I would like to ask that the committee not consider the partisan character of any area in its drawing of the maps. If the committee finds that such an approach is untenable, then it should focus on maximizing the competitiveness of the districts of the state. Our democracy depends on the ability of voters to decide to elect different representatives. Drawing lines such that one party or another is unduly favored diminishes the quality of our representation. While New Jersey may lean toward one side, New Jersey is a diverse state, and having completely static representation is no valid representation of our state. To maximize competitiveness should be defined as having as many districts where the vote for one party does not exceed 55% in a mean of the most recent gubernatorial election and the past two presidential elections. In other words, a district which one party won with 52% of the vote would be competitive, while one won with 64% of the vote would not be.

Some minor considerations I would also like to suggest is that as few counties, municipalities and voting precincts be split as possible. Federal jurisprudence currently requires that the population deviation be as close to nil as possible, and all but two states (Iowa and West Virginia, states where counties cannot be split in the formation of districts) have a deviation of 1 or less persons per district. This functionally requires that municipalities and precincts be split. This should be minimized because the administrative burden of dealing with split precincts often can result in miscast votes, or the universal right to suffrage otherwise being restricted.

Additionally, I recommend that the area of Somerset County and Morris County be kept together in one district. Together the two counties form a community of interest that is roughly the same size (in terms of population) as a congressional district. At a minimum, the portion of Somerset County typically called "Somerset Hills", the municipalities of Peapack and Gladstone, Far Hills, Bedminster Township, Bernardsville and Bernards Township, should be in the same district as their neighbors directly to the north in Morris County: Chester Township, Mendham Township, Mendham Township, Harding Township and Long Hill Township.

I would again like to thank the committee for providing the space to discuss and provide responses to the development of congressional maps for the 2022-2030 period. Transparency is a must in our search for better governance. Thank you for your time.