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# *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”*

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**LOCATION:** Meeting via Zoom

**DATE:** October 30, 2021  
10:00 a.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, 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*

Jessica Oestreicher

Roshard Williams

*Office of Legislative Services*

*Commission Aides*

*This transcript was prepared using an outside recording not designed for transcription purposes.  
Therefore, portions of this transcript may not be completely accurate as portions were inaudible and/or indiscernible.*

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

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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 LoGripio  
Lynda Pagliughi

NEW JERSEY CONGRESSIONAL  
REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

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John E. Wallace, Jr.  
*Chair*

REDISTRICTING COMMISSION NOTICE

TO: MEMBERS OF THE REDISTRICTING COMMISSION  
FROM: JOHN E. WALLACE, JR. – CHAIR  
SUBJECT: REDISTRICTING COMMISSION MEETING - OCTOBER 30, 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 remotely via Zoom on Saturday, October 30, 2021 at 10:00 AM.**

The Commission will take oral testimony from members of 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/>.

Those wishing to testify must register online at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>. Select October 30 on the calendar and click on Redistricting Commission for the Registration Form link. Please complete all required information and make sure to click the box next to the "Do you wish to testify?" question. Registrations must be received by Friday, October 29, 2021 at 3:00 PM. Upon successful registration, you will receive an email confirming receipt. At a later date, you will receive another email with instructions for testifying. To ensure that all who wish to testify can do so, the Chair may limit public testimony to 5 minutes or more per person.

You may also submit written testimony instead of, or in addition to, oral testimony by email to [OLSAideREDC@njleg.org](mailto:OLSAideREDC@njleg.org) by Friday, October 29, 2021 at 3:00 PM. Written testimony will be included in the Commission's record and distributed to all Commission members.

(OVER)

Redistricting Commission

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October 30, 2021

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Issued 10/22/21

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For changes in schedule due to snow or other emergencies, see website <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us> or call 800-792-8630 (toll-free in NJ) or 609-847-3905.

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**HONORABLE JOHN E. WALLACE (Chair):** Good morning, and welcome to the second public hearing of the Redistricting Commission.

It is a virtual hearing, as you know; and hopefully, we will not have any technical problems.

The purpose of today's hearing, similar to the last hearing, is to hear from the various citizens who want to speak today. We want to receive your views on what the redistricting map should look like. We will hear from those citizens who have indicated they wish to address the Commission today.

Before we hear from those persons, I would ask our Secretary to please call the roll.

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

**MS. REDD:** Present.

**MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER:** Commissioner Pagliughi.

**MS. PAGLIUGHI:** Present.

**MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER:** Commissioner Nash.

**MR. NASH:** Here.

**MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER:** Commissioner LoGrippe.

**MR. LoGRIPPO:** Here.

**MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER:** Commissioner Lagos.

**MS. LAGOS:** Here.

**MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER:** Commissioner Gopal.

**SENATOR GOPAL:** Here.

**MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER:** Commissioner Duffy.

**MR. DUFFY:** Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Delgado.

MS. DELGADO: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Ashmore.

MS. ASHMORE: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Albano.

MS. ALBANO: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Republican Chair Steinhardt.

MR. STEINHARDT (Republican Delegation Chair): Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Democratic Chair Fuller.

MS. FULLER (Democratic Delegation Chair): Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: And Chair Wallace.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Here.

Thank you, Madam Secretary.

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

MR. STEINHARDT: On behalf of the Republicans, I would just like to say welcome, Chairman, and to all in attendance.

My name is Doug Steinhardt. I do have the privilege of serving as a member of the Republican delegation, together with my colleagues Michele Albano, Jeanne Ashmore, Lynda Pagliughi, Mark Duffy, and Mark LoGrippe,

We're excited to work alongside a dedicated group of public servants and New Jersey leaders like yourself, Chairwoman Fuller, and our Democratic counterparts.

First, I just want to say that we're committed to a transparent process. Second, I'm proud to have more than doubled the number of public

hearings with this Commission. We're looking forward to listening to -- more important, learning from members of the public during the process. Finally, we are committed to increasing engagement from the State's grassroots, and work genuinely to help improve the Commission's ability to achieve a map that we know will be responsive to and representative of the makeup of the State's voters.

So Chairman, thank you very much; and Chairwoman, thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you, Chair Steinhardt, for your comments.

Anyone else?

MS. FULLER: Thank you, Chairman Wallace.

I have the pleasure of serving as the Chair of the Democratic Delegation to this Commission.

I just want to thank Chairman Wallace; and also thank OLS for their work in putting together today's meeting, and all the work that they're doing to keep this process going.

I'm here with our fellow Democratic Commissioners Ms. Delgado, Senator Gopal, Ms. Lagos, Commissioner Nash, and Mayor Redd. And we're happy to be here this morning with everyone for the second of our 10 public meetings.

To echo what was said by Chairman Wallace and Chairman Steinhardt, we are excited to have an open and transparent public process and see the input from the public is really key and critical to this process. And we'll continue to work to find ways to engage the public and increase

ways for access and input into this process as we develop a fair and equitable map for the people of New Jersey for the next 10 years.

So we look forward to the testimony we will hear today.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you, Chair Fuller.

Is there anyone else? (no response)

Hearing none, we'll get right to our speakers. And I will give the list of the first five so that at least those five will know the order that we will call you in.

The first witness will be Lisa Rose, followed by Rachel Davis, followed by Robert Fischer, followed by Hannah Korn-Heilner, and finally Patricia Sodolak. They are the first five; and when we get to the fourth one, I will then name additional speakers, and the order.

Without further ado, I would ask that Lisa Rose please come on.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Lisa Rose is not here yet. But your next speaker is here, Ms. Rachel Davis.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay; we'll ask Ms. Davis to come on.

**RACHEL DAWN DAVIS:** Thank you so much.

My name is Rachel Dawn Davis, and I am the Public Policy and Justice Organizer for Waterspirit, a nonpartisan, nonprofit spiritual ecology center and ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. We represent thousands of members throughout the state, with our offices headquartered at the First Presbyterian Church on occupied Lenni Lenape land known as Rumson, New Jersey, previously at the Stella Maris Retreat Center in so-called Long Branch. But that property was lost due to Superstorm Sandy.

Waterspirit has been fortunate to work as part of the Fair Districts New Jersey Coalition, given the link between advocating for clean water access, and affordability, and community representation by elected officials.

Decisions made today will have consequences for tomorrow. I hope that my testimony today can play a small role in ensuring that maps drawn in the 2021 redistricting cycle fairly represent all communities and future generations of New Jerseyans.

We recommend that the Commission host a meeting for each county to ensure unencumbered representation from throughout the state that has otherwise been untapped. As we saw with respect to the in-person meeting planned with little notice in Toms River, climate change affects whether or not people can partake in these meetings. Having more meetings would help provide additional opportunities for the public to partake in a process that will have lasting effects for New Jersey's families. We urge that the Commission reschedule that meeting for another date, if that hasn't been done yet already.

The Commission's website is lackluster; and the Commission can make it much easier to enlist participation from community residents. We request an open, transparent, and publicly inclusive process, where draft maps, supporting data, and other supporting information are visible to all those seeking out information regarding this very key process.

The census data used of late was collected during a worldwide pandemic. As you all know, the results suffered tremendously. This census demonstrates population growth among New Jersey's communities of color, anticipating that communities will be more diverse with every year that passes

-- certainly, 10 years out from now. It is vital to actively take into consideration that everyone has a different situation with respect to COVID-19 risk: work, childcare responsibilities. We need an improved registration process. We must respect communities of interest, and the Commission should be engaging with these communities to prevent them from being divided for the benefit of political gains.

Here are two examples of how to do it right: the California Citizens Redistricting Commission and Colorado Independent Redistricting Commissions. Given those two examples, so starkly different from New Jersey's, a commitment from New Jersey's Redistricting Commission should be made to shift the existing website accordingly.

We are all aware voting rights are actively being rolled back across the country, with no end in sight. The redistricting work that this Commission has been charged with is an essential part of our democracy. District maps affect every aspect of our lives. The lack of opportunities to partake in these meetings is striking when we think, in particular, about the young people bearing witness.

New Jersey's ballot design is an issue of fairness, equity, and accountability. New Jersey, unfortunately, still uses an archaic ballot design in which groups of county-level endorsed candidates are lumped together, making them more visible to voters. According to a Communications Workers of America analysis, the county line has a "significant impact on voter behavior. CWA found that no legislative incumbent on the line had lost a primary election in New Jersey between 2009 and 2018." In New York, the advantage of income is rarely absolute, given 22 state legislative incumbents lost primary elections through 2018 and 2020. From that same

analysis, only two Congressional incumbents have lost a primary in New Jersey in the last 50 years. In both cases, they lost to other incumbents, following redistricting that eliminated one of their districts. And in both cases, the incumbent who won the primary had also received the party endorsement and the county line in the county that decided the election.

Environmental racism affects New Jersey communities, and has for too many decades. All maps drawn should be drawn in the interest of the people and communities they serve, and not, as is often the case, to protect the power of a few.

We have seen how improper redistricting distorts and undermines the central values of our representative democracy. The advocacy for shared interests may come down to geographic location and floodplain. I grew up second generation in Teaneck, New Jersey. I see opportunity for the Redistricting Commission to keep Teaneck together, versus split; and keep Bergen County together as well.

Monmouth County, where I'm raising my family now, is becoming more diverse; and this should be represented as is, versus capturing data from nearby outside districts. Keeping communities of interest together is imperative.

Waterspirit would go so far as to say that watersheds could be used as one basis for understanding people voting with similar community priorities and interests. Gerrymandering of communities has stolen their power and guarantees the suppression of voices of New Jerseyans.

If we are to exist as a democracy, all voices must be heard; and allowing people like myself to testify is the best way to make sure fairness and justice is baked into the process. While we are advocating for whole

communities' representation, given the work we do to advance solutions-based climate policy and actions, we are ever-focused on young people and future generations. Youth deserve adults who will not make decisions based on their own malintent, be it for for-profit, political party gain, or personal ego. Young people deserve nonpartisan mapmaking and clear opportunities to partake as members of the public. Young people are experiencing the loss of their perceived future; yet voting is an action they look forward to still -- to being able to take when they come of age. Given their future is the murkiest with respect to global climate change, we cannot allow another redistricting process to go by without fighting for fair representation.

To reiterate, redistricting should require substantially equal population, geographic continuity, an effective representation, and effective representation of racial and linguistic minorities.

You are uniquely positioned to do distinguished work to advance democracy as a whole; not just in this state, but throughout the entire country.

Thank you, again, for your time and this opportunity to provide testimony.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much, Ms. Davis.

Our next speaker is Robert Fisher.

Robert Fisher, come on; Mr. Fisher.

**ROBERT FISHER:** First of all, I'd like to thank Chairman Wallace, as well as Chairman Steinhardt and Chairman Fuller of the Republican and Democratic delegations respectively.

I'd like to talk about two things today over the course of my testimony.

The first is, is that our Commission consider that New Jersey is a place where lots of young people are politically involved and deserve a level of empowerment. I chair our Teenage Republicans here in Bergen County; I serve on our Bergen County Republican Organization Policy Committee, which helps determine which candidates get the line; as well as serve as a high school coordinator for Turning Point USA, which helps get young people across New Jersey involved in conservative politics. I'm definitely a Republican, but I think it's important that we have a map that considers that all people in New Jersey -- Democrat, Republican, other party, and Independent -- want to be involved and want to contribute to a future of a State that they love a lot.

New Jersey's population is diverse among race, age, and other backgrounds. Twenty-two percent of New Jerseyans are under the age of 18, and we will be constructing a map this time around that will see the majority of them turn 18 and be eligible to vote. The last redistricting deal that was made in New Jersey, back in 2012 for the 2012 maps, did not create a map that served even 10 years, rather than looking at the future of our State. If we're going to follow the principle of really building for the future and building for future generations, we really need to consider mapmaking that looks to empower young people and doesn't seek to just gerrymander them based on what is going on in the *now*.

Young people have a lot to say about the topic, and they have a lot to say about other political topics on both sides of the aisle. If the Commission really wants to consider what the impact of mapmaking is going to be for future generations, it needs to ask young people, like myself, what we want to see happen and who we feel we should be lumped in with for the

upcoming cycle to see who would be elected to Congress. I'd love to see the Commission go to different schools, whether they be colleges or high schools around the state -- and really ask young people where they feel they identify as people with different experiences. From North, Central, and South, we all deserve to have that representation.

Secondly, I'd like to talk a little bit about my home County of Bergen County, and how we are a very politically heterogeneous County, and we need a map that really ensures that we have different representation based on region.

I happen to be from northern Bergen County. My hometown of Park Ridge is a mile-and-a-half from the New York state border, and we have people as far south as North Arlington, which could very well have been Essex County had the lines been drawn a little different. We have given Republicans and Democrats a shot at government control within the last 20 years; and, most recently, we've been run by Democrats, having previously been run by Republicans.

We gave the second-most votes of any New Jersey county to Donald Trump, and we gave the most votes to Joe Biden.

The problem with gerrymandering, especially in Bergen County, is that it sees people as dots on a map, as opposed to real communities with plenty of people in them who have different experiences, who work in different fields, and have different values. My own District, District 5, assumes that farmers in Sussex and Warren County have the same interests as people in Hackensack and Teaneck who commute to New York City every day for a living.

If I might address both sides of the Commission in saying that all people deserve to have adequate political representation, and one side should not dominate the other in that field; and that's what gerrymandering does. It looks at people like dots, as opposed to actually being people. We shouldn't just be boiling down entire communities to statistics on who votes Democrat, who votes Republican, or which District might be majority-minority, or which District might not be. We need to be looking within the framework of Federal and State laws on how to maximally represent every community of interest in New Jersey -- young people and minorities politically, in a certain county, being mapped.

If we really want a good litmus test on how to determine if a district is viable, think about 10 people sitting at a table. If you can get those 10 people to tell us one person to go to Washington and to get some things done, then that's a good map. But when you have farmers asking for farm subsidies, people in my town asking about how to lower property taxes, and people in Hackensack and Teaneck talking about urban affordability, that's a lot to put on one person's plate. We really need to look at districts that don't just analyze political voting trends, because those changes, we know -- the last map was supposed to be 6-6 for 10 years; it ended up being 10-2 and 11-1.

Democrats deserve this justice, just like Republicans. I don't think the Democrats in Hackensack and Teaneck particularly feel aligned with Republicans who live outside the city limits in Phillipsburg, and I think that that's something that we need to consider when constructing my own district and getting young people involved.

This Commission needs to consider how young people are going to be part of the future of the State, as so many of them leave after college. And one of the most important things within that whole process is the ensuring that we have Congressional representation that represents those young people, and make them try to want to be back in our state, as opposed to leaving. I say this as a Republican, but I say this is as a Republican who understands that people of every party deserve adequate representation.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much, Mr. Fisher.

Our next speaker is Hannah Korn-Heilner; followed by Pat Sodolak and then John Solarino.

Is Hannah Korn-Heilner available?

**HANNAH KORN - HEILNER:** Good morning.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

MS. KORN-HEILNER: Yes; and thank you to members of the Commission for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Hannah Korn-Heilner, and I currently reside in South Orange, but was born and raised in Montclair.

I'm here today to echo the testimony made last Saturday by Imani Oakley, who is running for Congress in the 10th Congressional District, on the plan to redistrict sections of Montclair in the 10th Congressional District into the 11th Congressional District.

As someone who has grown up in Montclair, I have seen firsthand how the South End, a historically Black neighborhood, has been marginalized and forgotten. Gentrification has raised housing prices and pushed Black residents out of the neighborhoods. And the only store in the

neighborhood was removed five years ago and has still not been replaced, leaving residents in a food desert.

The South End deserves representation that is reflective of their neighborhood and prioritizes their need. To redistrict this community into the 11th District, a District that is whiter and significantly wealthier, continues to take their power away and further marginalizes them.

Additionally, redistricting the historically Black section of Montclair, where Imani lives, into the 11th Congressional District, would pit Imani, a Black woman, against Mikie Sherrill, a white woman. Women have been underrepresented in Congress, especially in New Jersey, where currently only 2 of our 14 Federal representatives are women. To redistrict Imani's neighborhood into Sherrill's District would further limit opportunities to increase female representation, especially for women of color. This redistricting, if it occurs seemingly deliberately while Imani is running a competitive primary for the 10th District, will feel like yet another shameful day for New Jersey, and a reminder of the continued presence of the same old corrupt New Jersey Boys' Club.

I urge this Commission to keep the South End of Montclair in the 10th Congressional District, or with its sister communities in East Orange and Newark, to ensure its residents have fair representation that will reflect their interest in Congress.

Thank you for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Our next speaker is Patricia Sodolak.

**PATRICIA SODOLAK:** Good morning.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

MS. SODOLAK: My name is Patricia Sodolak, and I've been a resident of Bernards Township in Somerset County for 30 years.

I am not an elected official, nor am I a subject matter expert in redistricting; but I do care about election fairness.

I am a founder and admin of a grassroots group called We the People New Jersey-07, which was formed in 2017 after the election of former President Donald Trump. As such, I have a grassroots perspective of election activity in New Jersey District 7.

There are two points I'd like to make today.

First, New Jersey's 7th Congressional District was drawn to be a safe Republican seat. But changing demographics, an excellent candidate and an engaged grassroots movement did what nobody thought possible. We flipped the 40-year, safe Republican seat, and elected a Democrat. We got together and learned about how government works. We marched. We attended town halls. We held rallies and peaceful protests. We educated ourselves on the issues, our candidate's background, and where he stood on the issues. We canvassed, we phone-banked, we wrote letters to the editor. And to our great surprise and joy, we won. We won, and we did it legally, fairly, peacefully, and democratically. We followed all the rules; we worked within the system. We did this all with a map that was drawn to favor the Republican incumbent. We won because we had the better candidate and the better campaign.

CD7 is already a competitive District. Congressman Malinowski won by the narrowest margin of any Democrat in the House of Representatives. I'd say that's a competitive District.

This Commission should not make any radical changes to the map. Voters in the 7th should not be punished because they voted for a Democrat, despite a map drawn to favor Republicans.

Second, I understand that the 7th District is underpopulated and we need to add towns. I would suggest that it is time to unify Somerset County, and I'd like to share a story of why this makes sense.

I have a friend who lives in and owns a deli in Basking Ridge. His family friend owns a restaurant in another town in Somerset County. His family's friend recently shared with him that he is tired, stressed-out, disappointed, and ready to give up because he is basically running his restaurant now by himself, since he lost his staff many months ago during the pandemic. He has not received any financial assistance from the government, in all these months, even though he has tried to get relief. My friend asked if I could help. So first, I told him he should have his family friend talk to his representative. I asked what district the family friend lives in, and he said, "The same as ours; the one for Somerset County." I then explained that not all towns in Somerset County are in District 7, and that we need to find out the exact town he lives in. He looked very confused. This confusion is a problem. It's counterintuitive to have Somerset County split between two districts. I hope this confusion has not caused a small business owner to miss the deadline for financial relief. This type of confusion could be eliminated by putting all of Somerset County into the 7th Congressional District.

Thank you for listening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Our next speaker is John Solarino, and he will be followed by Nadia Rush.

Mr. Solarino. (no response)

**NADIA RUSH:** Good morning.

**JUSTICE WALLACE:** Is he available?

**MS. RUSH:** Hello; I heard you call my name. I'm Nadia Rush.

**JUSTICE WALLACE:** No, you're up next, Ms. Rush.

But John Solarino.

**MS. RUSH:** Okay.

**JUSTICE WALLACE:** S-O-L-A-R-I-N-O. Is he available? (no response)

Not hearing him come forward, I would then ask Ms. Rush to be our next speaker.

If Mr. Solarino comes in, we'll pick him up at a later point.

Ms. Rush.

**MS. RUSH:** Thank you.

I would like to thank everybody for the opportunity to speak and be here.

Hi, my name is Nadia Rush, and I live and work in Belleville, Essex County. I'm here to testify about important features of my community, and to urge you to keep it together in the next round of maps.

My community is largely made up of Hispanic and Black families that have lived in the area for generations. My community is growing in a very positive way. I see a lot of new home buyers are locating to our area, and it's great to see new families involved in our community.

Many of us visit the same local churches, the River of Life Assembly of God and Saint Peter's Roman Catholic Church in Newark. The

community also goes to the same movie theaters, malls, and local restaurants that represent the diversity of different cultures.

Belleville and my community are well-known for their cherry blossoms. As a matter of fact, every spring residents and visitors come to see the largest cherry blossom collections in the United States, which is in Branch Brook Park, Newark, New Jersey. It has more than 2,700 Japanese cherry blossom trees that burst into full bloom during the annual Essex County Cherry Blossom Festival.

We have a large hospital in the area, Clara Maass, that is very accessible to our community, which we are very proud of.

My community is bordered by Nutley to the north, Newark to the south, Route 21 and the Passaic River to the east, and Bloomfield to the west. We are relatively close to MetLife Stadium at Rutherford, New Jersey, and Red Bull Arena in Harrison, New Jersey. In addition, we are close to educational buildings at Rutgers University and NJIT, both located in downtown Newark. We really value being close to many wonderful institutions.

My community is in the 8th Congressional District and the 29th Legislative District.

Some of the issues that are most important to us are education, public safety, and healthcare. We are very proud of our public schools; Almost all the kids from our community attend Belleville High School. However, we are lacking in public safety infrastructure. Currently, we have a high rate of crime in our area. Adequate representation is important to us because we would like the government to help with local public safety measures and infrastructure needs.

Our community is a lot like Kearney, Harrison, Lyndhurst, and other diverse suburbs in the area, many of which are already in the 8th Congressional District with us.

We don't have a lot of similarities with the less-diverse or more rural areas of the state to the north and west.

To sum this up, the wider Belleville area is a tight-knit community with deep roots in the area, and we hope to continue to be represented together in the new district maps.

I thank the Commission for listening to me today, and I ask that you keep my community together when drawing new maps to the extent it is possible, without diluting the voting power of Hispanic and other communities of color, violating the law, or violating fair redistricting principles.

Again, thank you so much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Our next speaker up is Eugene Mazo, followed by Christine Preston, and Lauren Albrecht.

Eugene Mazo, please.

**EUGENE D. MAZO, Ph.D., Esq.:** Thanks, Chairman Wallace and fellow Commissioners, for having me.

My name is Eugene Mazo; I'm a law professor at Seton Hall Law School in Newark. Before teaching at Seton Hall, I taught at Rutgers Law School, also in Newark.

You don't know this, but I happen to be a scholar of election law. I specialize in voting rights, campaign finance, and redistricting. I've written and edited many books and articles on these topics. They can be found

online, in the public domain, and on the shelves behind me. I've also taught election law countless times -- including classes on voting rights, redistricting, and campaign finance -- over the years, not only at Seton Hall and Rutgers, but also at six other law schools in the United States.

I'm intimately familiar with the Federal law on each of these topics. And I think I'm the only full-time faculty member at either one of our State's law schools who specializes in election law. I'm teaching a class this coming January, when my students and I look forward to studying your maps and the data that you used to put them together.

Now, the science of redistricting has come a very long way. A decade ago, parties had access to data and software that allowed them to draw districts in sophisticated ways; but most citizens did not. And that has changed -- changed radically over the years. Now my own students, not to mention most citizens of New Jersey, can just go and create their own districts using data that's publicly available. And I urge everybody on this call, or anybody listening to this hearing, to go and try some of the software. Some of these are called *All About Redistricting*, which is run by Justin Levitt and Doug Spencer at the University of Colorado. There's another application called *Dave's Redistricting* app, which is very good; *PlanScore*, run by Nick Stephanopoulos at Harvard, is very good; *drawcongress.org*, run by Nate Persily at Stanford, is excellent.

According to the P.L. 94-171 file -- that's the census data that came out in August -- New Jersey has 9,288,000 people. That means that each Congressional District should have a target of about 774,082 people. And that's a deviation of about 13,361 people from the 2012 baseline.

But what I want to point out to you today is, the deviation that exists, especially in the State's urban districts where the deviation is especially large. The current 8th Congressional District has 81,699 more people than it did a decade ago. The 10th District has 76,310 more people, according to the census data, than it did a decade ago. And these two Districts happen to encompass our State's two largest cities, which themselves have seen significant population increases. So Newark now has 311,549 people, as opposed to about 280,000 people a decade ago; and Jersey City has 292,449. These are significant increases.

Now, in addition to being an election law scholar, I'm also a lifelong Newarker. I grew up in Newark; I've lived in the city since I was a small child. Before that, when I was a very small child, I lived in Jersey City. And what I could tell you -- both as a scholar in this field, but also as a citizen -- is that the 8th and the 10th Districts are kind of -- I wouldn't say *improperly*, but if they're *improvidently* drawn.

Let me give you some examples of this. Take this example: Peter Rodino, who represented the 10th District from 1949 to 1989, lived at 205 Grafton Avenue in the North Ward of Newark, which, for a long time, was part of the 10th District. Donald Payne, Sr., who represented the 10th District from 1989 to 2012, was also born in the North Ward. Both of these gentlemen attended Barringer High School, which is in the North Ward. But today, the North Ward finds itself in the 8th District -- as does the East Ward -- of Newark. And I can tell you how people feel about this -- they feel like they sometimes don't have a Congressman. I say that not only personally, but I say that because I am very much often in touch with my State and local officials.

Now, how did this state of affairs come to be? Well, when the last Redistricting Commission met -- which was chaired by then-Rutgers Law School Dean John Farmer -- when that Commission met a decade ago, the Democrats carved up the 10th and the 8th Districts on their own, and they did so largely by race. And the Republican Commissioners hardly cared because they, I don't think -- they probably didn't expect a Republican Congressman to be elected from either of these two Districts. By the way, I have a lot of these maps in my office because there were some Rutgers people involved at the time in redistricting.

So most African Americans were placed in the 10th District, to make it 51 percent African American both in total population and in citizen voting age population, what we call *CVAP*. And most Latinos were placed in the 8th District. The effects of carving up districts like this solely by race have been somewhat perverse; though I think the goals are very important. So let me just give you some examples of how it's perverse.

Today, Congressman Sires has an office in West New York, in Jersey City, and in Elizabeth; in other words, in Hudson County and in Union County. He has no office, however, in Essex County, despite having more than 150,000 constituents there, when you include Newark and also the city of Belleville. No members of his staff are from Essex County. And somewhat preposterously, his Jersey City office, which is located on Cornelison Avenue close to Journal Square, is actually located in Congressman Payne's Congressional District. It sounds funny. As a scholar, I've called his office and pointed this out to his staff many times, but there's no sense in me doing so because his staff understands the situation perfectly well.

Now, residents of Newark's North Ward and East Ward sometimes feel like they lack of representation. I guess that the 125,000 residents of Jersey City and the 65,000 residents of Bayonne, who find themselves in the 10th District, may or may not feel the same way.

I'm often in touch with elected officials in these municipalities who sometimes call me for advice or just to chat. And what I'm telling you is something that they all know to be true as well. Every elected official on the ground knows that there's some kind of problem here. These urban municipalities have unique issues; for example, immigration issues that come up. They have unique Federal issues. And when a Councilman who represents the North Ward or the East Ward of Newark is forced to call a Congressman about an immigration issue, he often finds himself, or she finds herself, calling the Congressman from Jersey City. So in theory, Newark and Jersey City have two Congressmen who represent both cities; in practice, they often sometimes have none.

The reason I'm trying to explain this is because our urban cities have unique problems -- unique Federal problems; and immigration is just one of them.

Now, the way to draw these districts, I think, is to create a Congressman for Newark and another Congressman for Jersey City. These are large urban cities that have unique issues, and a single Congressman should be dedicated to each. From there, the surrounding suburbs could be taken in. So for example, Donald Payne Senior's District -- from 1990 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2010 -- was always surrounded by suburbs, such as Bloomfield, Montclair, Glen Ridge, Maplewood, West Orange, and the

suburbs of Union County, where voters were largely supportive of the newer Congressman and of having a Congressman who was diverse.

Similarly, Jersey City should have its own unique Congressman; and then its surrounding areas -- like Hoboken, and Bayonne, Secaucus, Weehawken, West New York, and so forth -- should be added to that core. Parts of Newark, I don't think should be; I don't think it serves the residents of these urban areas well to do that.

The last thing I want to say is that very great care should be taken to preserve our State's majority-minority districts, including the majority-minority populations of the 10th and the 8th Districts. How is this to be done? Well, the answer is *carefully*, and here's where I'll conclude.

As every scholar in my field knows, there's a great tension that exists in Federal election law when it comes to drawing districts for minority voters. You can't draw a district predominantly on the basis of race, which is illegal under *Shaw vs. Reno* and its progeny of cases that came out of North Carolina in the 1990s. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the Voting Rights Act requires minority populations be allowed to elect "a representative of their choice." That's what the Voting Rights Act says. And the way around this tension -- and yes, it is a tension in Federal election law -- is to draw the 8th and 10th Districts with what has come to be known as *Coalition Districts*. Not *crossover districts* or *influence districts*; these are terms of art in election law, but as Coalition Districts. One in which, for example, Black voters in the 10th and Latino voters in the 8th are encouraged to make coalitions with other minority voters, but where no group necessarily possesses an absolute majority of the population. Though if they do, that's not a bad thing either. This is what cases like *Bartlett vs. Strickland*, *Miller vs. Johnson*, *LULAC vs.*

*Perry*, and other Supreme Court cases, allow. This may or may not make each district more competitive. I don't know whether that's a worthy goal or not -- we can debate the point -- but it would surely help to preserve two very distinct communities of interest, each of which consists of the urban residents of New Jersey's two largest cities, and each of which deserves to have, I believe, its own Congressman.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Our next witness will be Christine Preston, followed by Lauren Albrecht, and then Steven Barratt.

Christine Preston, please.

**C H R I S T I N E P R E S T O N:** Good morning.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

MS. PRESTON: I'd like to thank the Commission for allowing me to speak at this hearing today.

The participation in government of every citizen is vital to the Democratic process, and I appreciate the opportunity to be here.

My name is Christine Preston, and I'm here to represent Madison Area Call to Action, also known as *MACTA*, a grassroots political group of which I am a co-founder. We formed after the 2016 presidential election to motivate civic engagement at the local level. Our 400-plus members are diverse in background and thinking, including a variety of political affiliations. But we share the common goal of promoting democracy, fairness, and fiscal responsibility within the suburban commuter community of Madison, New Jersey.

Our members work to elect candidates at the local, State, and Federal levels; participate in civic engagement; build a stronger, more cohesive community; and bring focus to environmental issues.

MACTA was one of Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill's earliest supporters. We knocked on doors, made calls, organized rallies, and marched in the streets to elect a Democrat to New Jersey's 11th District, a District that had been represented by a Republican for 24 years. Mikie was elected in 2016 in a Republican-drawn District -- where her predecessor typically received 60 percent of the vote -- because she was the best person for the job. In fact, the 11th is still very competitive. Her margin of victory declined between 2018 and 2020, and the seat could possibly flip back in the coming 2022 election. Therefore, when making decisions about redistricting, a fair map must consider the prior map and the new census. We've been using a Republican-leaning map for the last decade. Current delegation is 10-2, but that is because of the change in the ways people vote and the popularity of candidates in competitive districts. It is not because the districts were not competitive.

One of the most important roles MACTA has played since our inception is to help elect women to office. Even now, in 2021, only 2 of New Jersey's 14-member Congressional delegation are women -- Mikie Sherrill and Bonnie Watson Coleman, from New Jersey's 12th District. Yet women represent slightly more than half of the U.S. population.

Women in elective office serve as role models for other women to get engaged in politics, including aspiring to run for office themselves. For example, in my local community two women have run and been elected to municipal office -- Deb Cohen and Rachel Ehrlich -- since Mikie ran in one.

This is also true in our neighboring towns of the Chathams, where three women -- Stacey Ewald, Carolyn Dempsey, and Jocelyn Mathiasen -- have all been elected to office.

Women in elective office make a difference when it comes to policy and decision making, especially with regard to issues like childcare, education, elder care, health care, workforce development, and employment. Since Congress' founding only seven women have represented New Jersey in the House and none in the Senate.

Therefore, I would like to ask this Commission to recognize the importance of keeping both of these women in office, as well as draw maps that will allow for a fair representation of the over 50 percent women who are in this state.

Thank you so much for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Our next speaker is Lauren Albrecht, followed by Steve Barratt, and Christian Fuscarino.

Lauren Albrecht.

**LAUREN ALBRECHT:** Hi, everyone.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

MS. ALBRECHT: Thanks, JUSTICE Wallace and Commission members.

I'd also like to thank the others here giving testimony, using their voices to effect positive change in this State that I love.

Thank you for allowing me a moment to speak with you on the important subject of congressional redistricting as related to our New Jersey LGBTQ community.

I'm Lauren Albrecht, and I wear several different hats. I am the Chair of the New Jersey Democratic State Committee's LGBTQ Caucus. I am, as well, Garden State Equity's Policy Consultant, and hold a number of other positions in advocacy and grassroots organizations.

I'm an engaged politico on the county, State, and national level. I'm a professional policy advocate. I have my personal roles as a wife, a daughter, a sister, a friend. By far, my most rewarding and challenging role is representative of and advocate for the LGBTQ community here, in Monmouth County where I live, and in New Jersey.

And seizing on this once-per-decade opportunity to increase LGBTQ representation, we are here to make this statement; but in the same vein as communities of interest in regards to race, ethnicity, and economic standing, our community's concerns are heard louder when we can speak as a collective voice. And when our voice is diluted by splitting up areas of LGBTQ-concentrated communities, we are more likely to suffer systemic erasure, which, unfortunately for us, often results in the removal of our legally protected rights in military service, healthcare, workforce, education, housing, and basically every metric by which the success of a community is measured.

I'd like to highlight for you some of the more glaring disparities that exist between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ residents of America.

At least 31 percent of transgender people have considered attempting suicide, which is three times more than the general population of non-LGBTQ counterparts; 46 percent of LGBTQ people still report being closeted in the workplace, right now, in 2021. If you can say, honestly, that in your workplace you don't hesitate to refer to *my husband* or *my wife*, if you're

cisgender or straight, you're lucky. Because 46 percent of us do hesitate before we say something like that.

Fewer than 0.3 percent of Fortune 500 board directors are openly LGBTQ as of last year. Seventeen percent of LGBTQ respondents to a poll by the HRC last year lost their jobs amid the corona virus pandemic, compared to 13 percent of the non-LGBTQ population.

I balk at any comparison between calling oneself a political minority in their town or county, to the reality of a true, unequal minority whose rights, safety, and livelihood, based on the immutable truth of personal sexual orientation or gender identity, are consistently up for debate. And when the consolidation of people of one political party is weaponized to deny my rights or the safety of our LGBTQ children -- yes, I disagree with that.

In New Jersey, not a single member of our State Legislature identifies as LGBTQ, nor any member of our Federal delegation. Despite this absence -- which is not for our lack of trying -- and despite what the census says, we do exist. And study after study and, most recently, in New Jersey, the report of the Transgender Task Force, convened by Governor Murphy, showed the needs of our community to be *unique*.

Where I live in Wall Township, in Congressional District 4, there are probably not -- it's probably not home to a large population of LGBTQ residents. But again, though, it's nearly impossible to tell when the data relies on arriving at conclusions culled from a variety of sources, instead of seeing actual census numbers. But our District (indiscernible) communities of Neptune Township and specifically an Ocean Grove section, are home to a very large community of LGBTQ residents, much more akin in makeup to its neighboring town of Asbury Park. Asbury Park is currently

located in Congressional District 6, represented by Congressman Pallone, and it is for the inclusion of Neptune Township in this District that I am advocating today so that large areas of the LGBTQ community can be joined together again, as they previously were in the past, within the regulations set forth federally for this process.

Thank you again for your time, and that's all I have today.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right; thank you very much for your comments.

Our next speaker is Steve Barratt, followed by Christian Fuscarino.

Mr. Barratt.

**STEVE BARRATT:** Good morning.

Thank you, Chairman, and thank you members of the Commission for the opportunity to submit testimony this morning.

I'm just a citizen; I don't have a big résumé. But I do represent, this morning, the interests of Fair Districts New Jersey and the League of Women Voters, who have a petition entitled *Redistricting Must Prioritize Public Engagement*. And it gives five or six guidelines, and I'm kind of advocating those.

As of October 1, there were just over 6.5 million registered voters in the State of New Jersey. Of those, 39 percent chose to register as Democrats, 23 percent have chosen to register as Republicans, 1 percent registered as one of the other parties that are recognized in the State, and 37 percent chose none of the above and registered as *unaffiliated* with a political party.

So I find it a little galling that it was ever a goal of the Commission to achieve parity at 6-6 between the two parties. Party affiliation should have nothing to do with the drawing of legislative districts.

Now, if you haven't figured it out yet, I'm an unaffiliated voter, and frequently I'm dismissed as either leaning Republican or Democrat, not really Independent. And in New Jersey, it's very hard not to lean Republican or Democrat; because of the way elections are structured by the parties, there are no realistic alternatives to Democrat or Republican. We would like to see better choices; we would like to vote for individuals, and not parties, and you have the opportunity to see that that happens.

Unaffiliated voters outnumber Republicans in our State by almost 900,000; and there are, essentially, the same number of unaffiliated voters as there are Democrats. Yet, the Commission is basically 50-50 Democrat and Republican.

Considering these facts, I urge the Commissioners to follow the guidelines of the petition; in particular, and most importantly, that plans shall not be established for the purpose of favoring or disfavoring any office holder, candidate, or political party.

When I was working, I worked for a manufacturer; and we always felt like when you put a good process in place, you get good product. And what you're doing is configuring a process for the next 10 years. That product, that process must seek to create an environment where candidates for office engage in vigorous debate and compete for their position, focused on voters in every election. Competitive, fair elections yield superior government. And I don't think that party affiliation should have anything to do with the establishment of that process.

Thank you for your attention.

Good luck.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much, and we certainly can use the good luck. (laughter)

Next is Christian Fuscarino, followed by Ronald Pierce.

Christian Fuscarino.

**C H R I S T I A N F U S C A R I N O:** Thank you, Chairpersons Fuller, Wallace, and Steinhardt.

My name is Christian Fuscarino, and I'm the Executive Director of Garden State Equality, New Jersey's largest LGBTQ education and advocacy organization with nearly 150,000 members living in our state.

For centuries, forces have sought to erase LGBTQ people from society; from the *lavender scare* in the 1950s, where LGBTQ employees were hunted down and fired from government positions; to more recent history, with the Trump Administration purposely removing LGBTQ identities from the 2020 census, essentially setting back important data on the LGBTQ community for another decade.

Garden State Equality is well-positioned to talk about the erasure of LGBTQ people. One of the projects we lead in New Jersey is LGBTQ inclusive curriculum with Make it Better for Youth. In many of these lessons, we cover historical contributions from LGBTQ people, some ranging back centuries to cultures and peoples long gone, where LGBTQ people lived openly and, in many cases, were seen as gifted spirits. Often we hear folks are shocked to hear about historical LGBTQ people because of the success of those who have sought to erase us. Did you know that Native Americans have a group of people called *Two Spirit*? They are often seen as gifted for

being able to transcend from one gender to another. There are many examples of this throughout humanity that you may not be aware of.

Today, I can proudly say the majority of Americans understand the importance of LGBTQ people being treated equally in the law -- valued, seen, and heard. Unfortunately, many of the systems that exist still have inequities built into them -- mechanisms that put LGBTQ people at a disadvantage, and closed hearts and minds that lead to LGBTQ people facing high rates of discrimination and abuse.

Much like the communities of interest in regard to race and ethnicity, our community's concerns are heard louder when we can speak as a collective voice.

Our community faces unique challenges when it comes to healthcare, equality, discrimination, and education. It is imperative that we are able to have our collective voices heard.

Garden State Equality's statewide needs assessment found staggering data that highlights LGBTQ older adults experience higher rates of abuse in older adults facilities. Many of these individuals spent their lives fighting for the rights that many enjoy today. Now, they're being fed, clothed, and bathed by someone who's abusing them.

Transgender women of color have the highest rates of unemployment. LGBTQ youth experience some of the highest rates of bullying. Forty percent of all homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. That means that nearly 50 percent of every homeless child in America is LGBTQ identified.

We face housing discrimination that often isn't held accountable by the law against discrimination. According to the State Police, hate crimes

against LGBTQ people increased this past year, and is one of the top target groups. Yet we have no LGBTQ legislators in our state, and only a handful of queer and trans elected officials in office.

Whether you believe the system was designed purposefully to keep queer people out of office or not, I'm here to tell you today that we face great barriers when it comes to having a seat at the table. The data, privately collected because the government doesn't collect it, exists and is here telling us about these disparities.

Now, while there is not a magic wand that will solve all of these problems, I'm here to tell you today that we can give the queer and trans community a unified voice by slightly expanding the 6th Congressional District to include Neptune and Neptune City. Asbury Park has long been a hub for the LGBTQ community going back decades. We know that it's one of the largest clusters of queer and trans people in the state, outside of Maplewood, South Orange, and Hoboken-Jersey City. Yet this cluster of queer and trans people is split between two Congressional Districts. Asbury Park is only one-and-a-half square miles, and housing is not only limited but, in recent years, gentrification has kept waves of queer and trans people of lower income out of Asbury Park, pushing them into Neptune and Neptune City.

Take a drive through Ocean Grove, which borders Asbury Park, and you will see rainbow flag after rainbow flag flying from the homes. In fact, Ocean Grove was at the center of the marriage equality fight because of the number of LGBTQ couples living there. It even has its own LGBTQ group, Ocean Grove United, because of how many in our community live there. Ocean Grove, alone, should be reason enough to include Neptune in

the 6th Congressional District. But Neptune proper, including Neptune City, which is positioned in the middle of Neptune -- you have to drive through Neptune City to get to some parts of Neptune, but I'll leave that for a municipal consolidation conversation -- within the last 5 to 10 years many LGBTQ people have been moving into Neptune and Neptune City because of the housing limitations of Asbury Park. Events hosted in Asbury Park will often draw many from the surrounding communities.

We must bring this community together under one Congressional District. We may never see an LGBTQ person in our lifetime here in New Jersey; we may not see a U.S. Senator from the LGBTQ community. It may be another decade before we have someone representing our community in the Legislature. And, in the meantime, our community faces obstacles, from unemployment, to housing, to abuse, and discrimination. At the very least, let's have a unified voice in the 6th Congressional District by bringing together the LGBTQ community in Neptune Township and Asbury Park.

Thank you for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Our next witness is Ronald Pierce, followed by Teresa Brown.

**R O N A L D P I E R C E:** Good morning, and thank you to the Commission for allowing me to speak this morning.

My name is Ron Pierce, and I'm the Democracy and Justice Fellow for the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. And today, I'm speaking about my community.

I live in Ocean County in Brick, New Jersey, currently in the 3rd Congressional District. My community is a tight-knit community made up,

in large part, by seniors. The community's northern part has, amongst other things, the Brick Reservoir and the city Refuse Center, where community members can drop off refuse that should not be placed in trash pickup or recycling bins, such as paint cans and large boxes of cardboard.

The west side of the community is bordered by the Garden State Parkway which I, along with others, utilize to get to work. However, it also contains our fire company and our EMS services. To the east border is approximately Brook Boulevard and Route 70 to Princeton Avenue. The southern border is where Route 70 takes a decidedly more western direction; and Princeton Avenue -- that is a peninsula running into the Metedeconk River.

Within these borders is our ShopRite and our Dollar Tree, several shopping centers, a golf course, bowling alley; City Hall, where many community events are communicated and held to and for the senior communities; the Brick Branch of the Ocean County Library; Lowe's, where my wife works; down Princeton Avenue is a seniors' housing center that houses the 15th and 18th District voting sites, where my wife and I are poll workers.

The senior community utilizes these to maintain their healthy lifestyle and provide a tax base for the schools that are within our community.

This community has, within its borders, several 55-and-over communities that utilize various services and have been part of the attraction to businesses that have started and thrived in this community.

During the summer months, our community has a farmers market on the Brick shoreline that allows community members a leisurely shopping experience within its community.

To change its borders would be to dilute the value that attracted these businesses to the area, and hurt the community's basic economic base, as well as the community's overall stability.

I urge you to maintain the 3rd District as it is, because this here District, within its borders, has shown that it can be -- it is a competitive district in that Andrew Kim, who is a Democrat, is our Congressman -- and we are very happy with his work -- but it is within -- the State Legislature is completely Republican. So we're a District that has competition, and it doesn't need to be changed, and we do not want to change. We are very happy with the District as it stands, and the people as they stand.

So thank you for allowing me an opportunity to highlight the importance of my community.

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

Our next speaker is Teresa Brown.

**T E R E S A B R O W N:** Good morning.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

MS. BROWN: I'd like to thank the Commission for allowing me to speak today.

My name is Teresa Brown, and I am the Administrative Director for the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. I live in Union Township, and I'm here today to testify about important features of my community.

My community is a very diverse suburb with mixed income families and lots of working-class people. Union Township boasts great ethnic and racial diversity, which is one of the reasons that I chose to buy a home here and move my family here over 15 years ago.

The ethnic makeup of my community includes residents from Brazil, Africa, Italy, India, Ireland, Peru, Poland, Germany, and the Caribbean, among others. We are referred to as a *minority-majority* town, and share a melting pot of different languages and cultures.

My community has many religious houses of worship, many faith-based civil and social organizations.

According to *money.com*, my community is ranked number 13 in best places to live in Union County, and the 43rd best place to live in America. We are incredibly proud of our highly rated public school system, and the world class educational institution Kean University.

Even with these accolades, historically redlining has created significant disparities between the north and south parts of the community. The north section of Union has significantly more residents of color than the rest of the township.

My community also includes Union Center and Route 22 retail commerce.

My community is split between the 7th and the 10th Congressional Districts, and is in the 20th Legislative District. The Congressional split disproportionately affects the northern section of my community, which, again, is predominantly residents of color.

Some of the issues important to my community are education, safety, infrastructure, and affordability. Over the past few years, we have grown significantly, with lots of new construction, development, and a steady influx of new residents coming in and buying homes.

We have an increase in families with small children, and millennials are migrating to the area.

As development continues, the population of my community will continue to grow. We are already experiencing overcrowding, which is impacting traffic patterns and public area parking.

My community could use government support to help make sure we have enough schools, well-maintained roads, and other infrastructure to meet the needs of the new growth.

We could also use help in keeping the community affordable, particularly for the working class. We are a proud legacy of family values; however, many of our up-and-coming families cannot afford to remain here as the boom and development has pushed the prices way up. The luxury rentals have out-priced affordability for long-standing residents and their families. We have concerns about taxes; affordability and sustainability are critical issues for all of the residents of my community.

Although we have many urgent care facilities, and excellent professional medical services, we must travel miles for a full-service hospital. We have an emergency room and a satellite facility of Overlook Hospital, but we don't have a full-service hospital of our own.

I believe that the Federal government can help ensure that our community has the infrastructure that is needed as we continue to grow, and maintain affordability for the diverse groups of people who call Union home for many years.

Currently, because we are split, we don't have one direct representative to go to for help, so we cannot speak with a united voice. Putting all of Union Township in one District would allow for more focused attention for Federal funding and allocation of essential resources to align with my community's growth.

Finally, to sum up my testimony -- I live in a unique community that is dissimilar to any of our bordering neighbors when it comes to diversity. With expanding development, we need more schools, more public services, and more infrastructure to mitigate issues that are related to the growth.

As I said, some of my community has clear racial bias separations, as indicated by the Congressional District mapping split between District 7 and District 10. Please do not diminish the voting strength of our residents of color; but instead, empower them with fair mapping considerations.

I thank the Commission for listening to me today, and ask that you keep my community together when drawing new maps. And consider bringing north Union into the greater community of Union Township to empower all of our residents with the voting power for representation and funding.

Thank you again.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Our next speaker on the list is Neha Aluwalia, and I apologize if I have mispronounced that name.

That's Neha A-L-U-W-A-L-I-A.

**NEHA ALUWALIA:** Hi, everyone.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

MS. ALUWALIA: Good morning.

Hello; my name is Neha Aluwalia. I am 21 years old, and a current senior at Rutgers University in New Brunswick; from Plainsboro, New Jersey.

I believe that each citizen is the expert of their own community, so I'm here today to testify about the important features of my community in Plainsboro, New Jersey, which is located in Middlesex County.

According to census data, Plainsboro is composed of 60 percent Asian residents. Additionally, over half of my hometown was born in another country, including myself and all of my immediate family members.

The immigrant population in Plainsboro is a central part of the fabric of my community. We have many South and East Asian places of worship, grocery stores, and businesses in Plainsboro and the surrounding area.

Plainsboro borders Cranbury, South Brunswick, East Windsor, Princeton, and West Windsor. It's in the 14th Legislative District and the 12th Congressional District.

Plainsboro is a suburban town with many residents using the Princeton Junction train station to travel to work in New York City.

Plainsboro is also joined in a Regional School District with West Windsor, and has a lot in common with this town. Many families like my own moved to Plainsboro for the quality of the West Windsor-Plainsboro School District, which is one of the best school districts in the state. Education is an extremely important value to the residents of Plainsboro.

Plainsboro, also, doesn't have a gas station located in our town, so many residents travel to West Windsor regularly to fill up their tanks.

In addition to West Windsor, Princeton and Plainsboro both have very strong connections to each other as well.

Plainsboro contains Princeton University's Forrestal Center campus, and I also travel between Plainsboro and Princeton to visit my grandmother.

The needs of residents in suburban and heavily Asian Plainsboro are very different from the city of Trenton, which is currently also included in the 12th Congressional District. This difference may be helpful in consideration when drawing your map.

I want to thank you for your time, and ask for your consideration in preserving Princeton, Plainsboro, and West Windsor in the same Congressional District without diluting the power of communities of color or otherwise violating the law or Fair Districting principles.

Thank you very much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Our last speaker who I have on my list is Mohamed Khairullah.

**MAYOR MOHAMED T. KHAIRULLAH:** Yes, good morning--

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

**MAYOR KHAIRULLAH:** --JUSTICE Wallace and members of the New Jersey Congressional Redistricting Commission.

My name is Muhamed Khairullah; I am the Mayor of Prospect Park in Passaic County, and currently the longest serving Muslim elected official in the state with my 20th year about to end in December.

I'd like to thank you for holding these historic hearings.

At a time when our democracy is under so much strain, your decision to open up this pivotal process for input from our state citizens and

communities is a great positive in the cause of transparency and good government. Your work should be a model for other states to emulate.

I also would like to thank you for allowing me to speak before you about my concerns and the importance of our own communities' priorities.

Thankfully, unlike 10 years ago, New Jersey is not losing any of our elected representatives in Congress. We beat the odds, and our State gained population at a rate that surprised many people. This growth portends well for the future of our great State.

But even without loss of representation this time around, I know the Commission has a difficult job to craft a map that fulfills its obligations under our Constitution, while adequately protecting the interests of all New Jerseyans.

Our Constitution demands one person, one vote. That means districts are even so all of us receive the same fair representation. that applies whether you are a man or woman, white or Black American, Latino, or Asian American.

Fairness, both in a legal sense and a practical one, is precisely why our great State has this Commission. Our Commission must keep this requirement close in your minds as you consider the Congressional map that will be in place for the next 10 years.

I want to speak to our Commission today in favor of continuity of leadership and continuity of district lines that protect our special communities.

Our State enjoys one of the most influential delegations in the country. Our members have built important seniority we must preserve,

including Chairs of important House committees and subcommittees. With New Jersey sandwiched between New York and Pennsylvania, our interests can often fall through the cracks. So continuity of our State's strong team of leadership in the nation's capital is essential.

At the same moment, continuity of our lines is important. This is particularly true for our communities in Passaic County. Our cities and towns are unique in their own individual rights; but they are also closely connected in unique ways that merit attention.

Passaic County towns are united by our physical beauty, rich history, and vibrant culture. Anchored around Paterson, Clifton, and Passaic City, we do not have the financial base of other areas. Our communities are principally working class and middle class. Together we make up a beautiful mosaic, and I urge you strongly to keep that mosaic together in a Congressional District.

If New Jersey is a good representation of America's diversity, Passaic County is an engine of New Jersey's diversity. Our communities are brimming with the diversity that makes New Jersey and America the envy of the world. Passaic County's cities and towns are home to vibrant Black American communities, Latino American communities, Ukrainian American communities, Polish American communities, Turkish American, and, of course, Arab American communities. I can personally speak to the fact that the Arab American and Muslim American community is growing in strength, and their voice is listened to because they are not divided.

The Commission must keep the need of this community of interest in mind. Many of these nationalities and backgrounds make up among the largest communities for their perspective groups in the entire

country. That speaks to the specialness of our area. And it's important to remember that diversity. If you have the time, I could list all the large communities within our borders; but that might consume the entire hearing. Passaic County is one of New Jersey's great melting pots. Passaic County is the beating heart of New Jersey's diversity, and it should be held together as much as possible.

Thank you for listening to me, and thank you for considering them importance of maintaining a District for Passaic County.

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

That concludes the list that I have.

Secretary Kruger, are there any other witnesses for today's hearing?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Ms. (Indiscernible) Lockhart was here earlier. I do not see her on the line up anymore, and that is all I would have for today, Mr. Chairman.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay; and Ms. Rose did not appear?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Ms. Rose did not appear.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right; thank you very much.

Any other comments by any Commission members? (no response)

Hearing none, do I have a motion to adjourn?

MS. FULLER: Motion.

JUSTICE WALLACE: It's been moved; do I have a second?

MR. STEINHARDT: Second.

JUSTICE WALLACE: It's been moved and seconded.

All in favor say “aye.” (affirmative responses)

One final point -- our next public meeting is scheduled for November 13. We are trying to firm up Middlesex County College, but that has not yet been finalized. But hopefully, that will take place, and that will be 10 o'clock on Saturday morning.

With that, everyone please stay safe, and have a pleasant weekend.

The meeting is now adjourned.

**(MEETING CONCLUDED)**