
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: Meeting via Zoom

DATE: December 6 and 9, 2021
6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE 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 Doygala Ashmore

Mark Duffy

Mark LoGrippe

Lynda Pagliughi



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

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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 LoGripippo
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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 – DECEMBER 6, 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 Monday, December 6, 2021 at 6:00 PM.

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 must register online at <https://www.njredistrictingcommission.org/schedule.asp>. Registration is also available at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>. Select December 6 on the calendar and click on Redistricting Commission for the registration link. Registrations must be received by Monday, December 6, 2021 at 9:00 AM. Upon successful registration, you will view a printable receipt on screen.

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.

(OVER)

Redistricting Commission

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December 6, 2021

You may also submit written testimony instead of, or in addition to, oral testimony by email to OLSaideREDC@njleg.org by Monday, December 6, 2021 at 9:00 AM. Written testimony will be included in the Commission's record and distributed to all Commission members

Issued 11/29/21

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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JUSTICE JOHN E. WALLACE, JR. (Chair): Good evening, welcome to the ninth public hearing of the Redistricting Commission. It is a virtual hearing, as you are aware, and the purpose of tonight's hearing is to continue to give the public an opportunity to give us their views as to what the map for New Jersey should look like when it comes to our congressional districts.

In the past, we have asked citizens to limit their comments to five minutes; because of the long list this evening, I certainly hope that you will not mind that I restrict the speakers to three minutes tonight. Generally, if it goes over a little bit I do not say anything, but if you can cut down your comments to three minutes it will be very helpful to us getting through this evening's list.

Before we get started, I would ask the Secretary to call the roll.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Redd.

MS. REDD: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Pagliughi.

MS. PAGLIUGH: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Nash.

MR. NASH: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner LoGrippo.

MR. LoGRIPPO: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Lagos.

MS. LAGOS: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: I believe Commissioner Gopal has not arrived yet.

Commissioner Gopal.

SENATOR GOPAL: No, I'm here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Oh, sorry about that.

SENATOR GOPAL: That's okay.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Duffy.

MR. DUFFY: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Delgado.

MS. DELGADO: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Ashmore.

MS. ASHMORE: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Albano.

MS. ALBANO: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: I see that Republican Chair Steinhardt is here; he's in the waiting room.

And Democratic Chair Fuller.

JANICE FULLER (Democratic Delegation Chair): Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: And Chair Wallace.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: All members are present, Mr. Chairman.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, thank you very much, Madam Secretary.

Before I introduce and call our first speaker, is there anyone on the Commission that would like to make a comment?

MS. FULLER: No, Chairman, thank you for the opportunity. I think given the number of speakers tonight, we should just jump right in.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, thank you, I was hoping you would tell me that. (laughter)

DOUG STEINHARDT, ESQ. (Republican Delegation Chair): Same here on our side, Chairman, let's get started.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you, Doug.

All right, our first speaker tonight is Donna Williams, followed by Jose Ramirez.

Ms. Williams.

D O N N A E. W I L L I A M S: Good evening. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the Commission for hearing my remarks on this particularly critical issue.

My name is Donna E. Williams, and I am a resident of District 7 in Burlington County. I have lived in Willingboro for seven years. Prior to moving here, I was a resident of Edison.

I became more involved in the political process when two things happened: I became a member of NAMI NJ, the National Alliance on Mental Illness of New Jersey, and I became the Social Action Chair for my sorority, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. My chapter serves the Trenton area. As a member of these very well-known nonprofit organizations that have interest in the State district lines, I felt a responsibility to express my concerns to the Commission.

I am a Family Support Group Facilitator for the Southern Region, and -- I'm sorry, and a Southern Region Coordinator for NAMI NJ AACT-NOW. AACT-NOW stands for African American Community Together NOW. It's a multicultural group that connects people of color to mental health services and support groups that NAMI NJ provides. The need

for mental health services for people of color is on the rise, and as more people require services, access is a continuous challenge. As Coordinator, it is my responsibility to help the seven counties I serve to assist with creating support groups for people of color and access to services.

Willingboro is a community that is approximately 70 percent African American. Burlington City is more racially diverse, and we continue to live and work together. I have been able to be a part of a thriving and vibrant community. We show up to vote at every election. There is a positive relationship with the police in our community. We continue to build our mental health partnerships and services with Burlington County.

Our newly re-elected legislator, Senator Troy Singleton, Assemblyman Herb Conaway, Assemblywoman Carol Murphy, and current Congressman Andy Kim, have done an excellent job and continue to work hard to help Burlington County grow. We are represented fairly in the congressional map; the current district lines influenced the community for 10 years and, if changed, that impact can be felt longer if the needs of the community are negatively impacted.

There is more work that needs to be done. Our districts currently represent the presence of people in the community, and it's important that our voices continue to be heard. I ask that the Commission do not make any changes in the district lines that could work against the bias of the County and the residents that have worked so hard to create a community of shared values, education, mental wellness, and family living.

I thank you very much for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Jose Ramirez, followed by Jane Conklin.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, we are arranging for the translator for Mr. Ramirez right now. Maybe-- I don't know if you want to wait, or if you want to go to the next speaker and then to Mr. Ramirez.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, we'll do that; we'll ask Ms. Conklin to come on.

JANE CONKLIN: Hi, my name is Jane Conlin, and I live in Basking Ridge. I am a resident in CD7, which I can honestly tell you was something I didn't know 5 years ago. I always voted, but I knew nothing about my District, my local town politics, or even my congressperson.

Since 2016 I have learned a lot. I've learned that for decades, our District, County, and Town leaned Republican. On the district level, I now know that there is a reason for that -- our District was gerrymandered to protect the Republican incumbent congressman from both the primary challenge on the right, and from the Democrat in the general election.

I'll talk about threading the needle. Despite this gerrymandering, the 7th Congressional District has started to lean towards Democrats. The district voted for its first Democratic congressperson in a very long time, and he even got reelected. Somerset County, where I live, changed to a Democratic majority when previously, we couldn't even get a Democrat elected on the County level. And not only that, our two County Commissioners won reelection despite a red wave across the whole country and State.

Why is this? One thing I have also learned is that if enough people care, things can change. And I am surrounded in my town by people who care about making changes and about making sure elections are fair and

competitive. We are not afraid of hard work, and we are willing to stand up for what we believe. We have established a Democratic committee in town that is viable, and has put up town candidates as opposed to the Republican party running year after year uncontested -- even having one win for the first time since the 1920's.

We want to make sure that the District isn't set up to help a legacy Politician at the expense of the people who live here and have worked as hard as we have to make some positive changes. Please consider supporting our efforts and our participation in our democracy by ensuring things remain fair for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much for your comments.

Raysa, please let me know when the interpreter arrives.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: I will let you know. I don't see the interpreter in the Zoom room just yet.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, thank you.

Peter Rosario, followed by Patricia Doherty.

Mr. Rosario.

PETER T. ROSARIO: Thank you for having me, Commissioners. My name is Peter Rosario, I am the President and CEO of La Casa de Don Pedro in the North Ward of Newark, New Jersey. We're the largest Latinx-led agency in the State of New Jersey, and I've also served on the Passaic School Board -- Commissioner Lagos, hello; shout out, love from your family in Passaic.

We have done a lot as a Latino community, and I think the main thing we want to impart onto the Commission is all the goodwill we did during the Census, now it's time to reap that harvest, right. People came out and got counted more than they ever did before in the Latinx community, and now is the time for us to show that we counted you, now we want to value you, too. I mean, we have to continue celebrating. So I'm not here to criticize, I'm here to say let's continue building the momentum, let's continue celebrating that work.

Right now, we know we have two 50 percent or above bipoc majority communities -- please don't use the term minority and majority communities. We know we have two districts. We know four districts -- two other districts -- will turn almost by osmosis if we don't do anything to damage that. And then there are two other districts, 6 and 11, that we can have an opportunity to make sure that the demographic trends that are happening will give us six districts where we have the possibility of having bipoc majority districts. We have 12, let's ensure it's 6 and 6.

You have a simple choice. Either you can hold back the tide, or you can celebrate what's happening in our great state, and ensure that it remains and continues to grow in diversity.

Thank you for having me this evening.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The interpreter is here for Mr. Ramirez.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Give us your name, please.

INTERPRETER: My name is Valencia. My ID is 13875.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much.

Mr. Ramirez.

INTERPRETER: My pleasure.

J O S E R A M I R E Z (Speaking Through Interpreter): Good afternoon, everyone; my name is Jose Ramirez.

I lived in Morristown, New Jersey for five years. I am here today on behalf of the Latin community. I would like the Commission to hear a little bit about our community and what it means for me, for every one of us, for our way of life.

We have a presentation of 30 percent of the Latin community. The majority of it pays its taxes. We have direct and indirect jobs. We would like to be better represented in a fair way -- both in the State and in the local legislature. Our Latina population is growing significantly, year by year. For example: In the District 11 of the Congress, the Latin population grew between 10 and 30 percent.

That's why we would like to have more access to health programs, housing programs, and credit loans. We are also needing programs that assist adults that have just arrived to the country to learn the educational language, English.

However, the conclusion is that it doesn't matter where we are as Latins. It is almost certain that we will find ourselves underrepresented. I want a fair district for my community. I want fair districts for the communities in which there are other Latinos.

And last, but not least, I want fair districts for every Latin person, which represents 21.6 percent of the New Jersey citizens.

Thank you, and have a wonderful afternoon.

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

Professor Doherty, please.

PATRICIA DOHERTY: Good evening, Chairman Wallace, and the Commissioners.

I am Patricia Doherty, Research Director for NJ 11th For Change, which is an unaffiliated grassroots group whose mission is to advocate for all of the people of New Jersey's 11th Congressional District. Our objectives are to foster engaged and informed community to shape our elected representation, so that it is transparent, responsive, and accountable, and so that it reflects the values of fairness, compassion, inclusivity, and a decent quality of life.

We have over a dozen other members who wish to testify tonight, but we know how hard the Commission is working and what long hours you are spending in these hearings. So we wanted to be respectful of your time, and we advise most of those other members to submit written testimony in lieu of speaking in person here tonight. A few more of our group's leaders will be speaking at the overflow meeting later this week.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my observations and perspective on redistricting for New Jersey, and for our Congressional District 11. My remarks this evening are to describe and highlight CD11 as a transportation infrastructure commuter community of interest.

I am a 23-year resident of the Township of Nutley in Essex County. As a self-employed freelance theater designer, I currently work, commute, and transport supplies to performance spaces in New Jersey, New York City, Upstate New York, and other areas in the Northeast. You could say that not only could I tell you what exit I am off on the Garden State Parkway -- 152, by the way -- but also the exits for all the major highways, as well as the back shortcuts to avoid traffic all over our state. My perspective

comes from a knowledge of how my community members interact with space and the environments in which they work, live, and understand the world.

CD11 is primarily a suburban community that is part of the New York Metropolitan area. Our residents are predominantly people who travel to get to work, often a significantly different distance using public transportation, private vehicles, or both. Our common experience in these as commuters defines our Morris-Essex core as a community of interest that deserves unified, undiluted representation.

Many of us are families of two working parents, single parents who work two jobs, and single service workers and professionals. For people like us here in CD11, efficient, safe, reliable commutes are the critical factor in which being able to hold a job and grow with it. Reasonable commutes are also crucial for having a sustainable home life and community involvement, where we can see our spouses, extended family, friends, and neighbors more than in passing, raise our children with meaningful quality time or support of family members, and participate in our communities.

From Western Morris County to Essex County, all the way to Nutley on the extreme eastern edge, the biggest contingence of workers have jobs based in either New York City, greater Newark, or the Morristown-Parsippany areas. We have several major highways that define us. People work and commute along the I80, 280, 287 Corridor, and the West-East highways of West Route 46 and Route 3, leading to the Lincoln Tunnel and New York City.

I mention this in the following details, not to be nearly descriptive, but to provide insight into the factors that some of what we CD commuters have in common as a community of interest. We're defined by

our New Jersey Transit commuter lines, as well as the Montclair-Boonton lines, MidTOWN DIRECT, and the Morris-Essex lines. Estimates of typical daily ridership on the MidTOWN DIRECT line alone is estimated to be 165,000 commuters; also considered to be, by itself, the nation's third-largest transit system, with 165 stations -- many of which are in CD11.

We're defined by the east-west New Jersey Transit commuter buses that follow the Route 46 and Route 3 and local routes that pick up passengers within municipalities and integrated Park & Rides, and by the Morristown bus terminal. The latest data as reported November 10, 2021, show that both rail and bus ridership is closely approaching pre-COVID ridership levels as people return to work.

Although most CD11 residents who work in New York City commute via public transportation, those who do travel by vehicle use the major east-wide routes of I80, 280, Routes 46, and 3. Because of the suburban nature of our District, most intra-municipal and intra-county travel is by vehicle, resulting in substantial traffic issues through volume and time.

The corresponding infrastructure for all personal business and personal and business vehicles, as well as our New Jersey Transit buses and trains, need to have upgrades to the rail beds, bridges, and overpasses and highway maintenance; which is so critical to safety and function of the system. I'm sure the Commission members know all too well what the problems of potholes, depot (indiscernible) to fix crumbling, unsafe highways, bridges, and overpasses does for your quality of life.

Because of our density and location, the residents of CD11 experience unreasonable delays due to emergency repair, unsafe conditions, and endless reconstruction. The common physical, geographic, and

topographical realities of CD11 impact transportation, as well as the security of constituents' homes. Most of CD11 is bounded by the Passaic River, Watershed, and River Basin. Its tributaries flow through a major part of Morris County and all the way to the eastern part of Essex County, where it turns and flows into Newark.

Over the years, affected by climate change, we are seeing the CD11 communities affected every year by 50-and-100 year major floods from weather events such as Hurricane Floyd, Irene, Sandy, and the most recent District-wide floods of Ida on September 2nd -- as well as numerous tropical storms and nor'easters. Constituents' homes were inundated by flash floods with tragic deaths, injuries, and devastating flooded-out economic and property damage.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Pardon me, Ms. Doherty, if I might interrupt.

If you could please sum up; I let you go in excess of five minutes, I would have to trouble you but we have a lot of other witnesses.

MS. DOHERTY: Certainly.

JUSTICE WALLACE: You can submit written testimony in addition.

MS. DOHERTY: I will sum up.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you.

MS. DOHERTY: CD11 is community of interest as it pertains to our close connections and common experiences with the intertwined realities of transportation, commuter security, and safety. Our representation needs to understand how these complex factors are integrated and affect some of the critical parts of our lives.

By districting us together, we can elect a representative who really understands the needs of our commuters. Because the stakes in our transportation network are so high, we need a representative dedicated to our geographic region who is informed and dedicated by addressing the local conditions.

And one last appeal. I call upon the Commission to share their draft maps with the public so that constituents and communities of interest have a chance to review them and schedule additional public meetings so the communities of interest can express any concerns.

Thank you so much, I appreciate it.

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

Sharon Hallanan, followed by Craig Levine.

S H A R O N H A L L A N A N: Hello, and thank you. I am Sharon Hallanan, and I live in Lambertville, which is on the Delaware River on the very southern tip of Hunterdon County in the 7th Congressional District. I have two main things to contribute to this Redistricting discussion.

My testimony is prompted by having seen some news articles and social media posts about a possible theme of redrawing the lines for the 7th District, to be a “safe Republican District,” meaning more easily winnable for the Republican candidate based on party registrations and voting habits of people within the District boundaries. The postings asserted that this proposal would be done as a tradeoff for making some other district more “safe” for a Democratic incumbent.

I think this is a terrible idea. Having grown up learning about government at the time of the Watergate scandal, I consider it important to do everything possible to allow Americans to have faith in how our

government works. It is heartening that recently, when faced with troubling governmental actions and policies, more and more people have been participating in peaceful public rallies or engaging with their legislators in phone calls, letters, postcards, and town halls. These responses are valuable and important in a representative democracy to help keep elected leaders accountable to the citizenry and focused on the needs of the public.

That precious public engagement with government would be undermined by the suggestions I mentioned regarding redrawing the lines for District 7. That approach would make it seem like the system is stacked in favor of some powerful person or entity, instead of giving every voter a fair chance to have their voice heard.

My second theme today relates to this Commission's need to focus on communities of interest in drawing district lines. I realize that I have a personal perspective on the 7th District's line that you may not yet have heard. My household was one that was hit hard in the earliest weeks of the pandemic. Two household members had COVID-19, and one died. Looking back on the intense stressfulness of that time, I'm deeply grateful that Lambertville was part of District 7. My prime interactions in the early days were oriented with Hunterdon County, with quarantine and testing and contact tracing questions all going through the County Department of Health.

When I was finally able to do so, I got my first COVID test at the Somerset and Hunterdon County's joint testing site at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg. In those early days, it was so hard to get good, trustworthy information and most of it was flowing from the federal government. So from following news reports, I had found it reassuring that

my congressman and the Hunterdon County officials were working together to secure desperately needed testing and supplies for our region.

In the context of thinking about this redistricting process, I am deeply grateful that Lambertville was connected to its Hunterdon County community of interest in dealing with this health crisis. I wonder how much more confusing and time consuming it might have been if I had been represented by a different congressional office in adjacent Mercer County when the medical services and answers I needed were all based in Hunterdon County.

So I stress to this Commission how important it was for me, and remains for me now, that Lambertville should remain in the 7th Congressional District with our Hunterdon County community of interest.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my testimony with you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Craig Levine, followed by Andrew Sprung.

Mr. Levine.

C R A I G L E V I N E: Thank you, Judge Wallace and other members of the Commission for allowing me to testify this evening.

I appear representing J Street, a national pro-Israel, pro-peace advocacy organization, the New Jersey chapter of which I have the deep honor of Co-Chairing. While, as you might imagine, the principle focus of J Street's work is in the area of foreign policy, that work is firmly rooted in our underlying values and our belief in democracy. To the degree that democracy is threatened in our own country, any attempts to promote international peace and human rights -- the core of our mission -- will come to nothing.

We note that a Princeton University study -- with which I'm sure you're familiar -- found that the 2011 congressional redistricting in the United States around the country a decade ago was the worst epidemic of gerrymandering in the last half-century. This year, persistent and grave reports of attempts to create un-democratic, deeply gerrymandered maps in large numbers of states -- maps in which politicians pick the voters, instead of voters selecting their leaders, give us great concern.

This only adds to the threats of new laws in a variety of states attempting to make it harder for Americans to vote and attempts to replace nonpartisan election officials in their role of vote counting, of all things, by partisan legislators. Until national legislation is enacted and enforced, rendering illegal racial and partisan gerrymandering, only fair state redistricting commissions and a vigilant citizenry can stand up to such threats.

We note that in New Jersey, the 2011 Congressional Redistricting, enacted by the action of its chairman that year, adopted a partisan map proposed by the Republican party representatives on that commission. The immediate result was that the Congressional Delegation voted in, in the next election, so the loss of a Democratic seat based on the new map despite the clear preference of New Jersey voters for the Democratic president, President Obama, in both the '08 and 2012 national elections.

J Street supported a number of candidates who aligned themselves with our views in the 2018 and 2020 Congressional elections. Several of them garnered broad support among swing voters, winning elections over incumbents in what were considered Republican-leaning

districts, despite those 2011 partisan maps, with the result that Republicans now represent only 2 of our current 12 districts.

We would like to caution the Commission that creating a fair map for the next decade should not be about punishing the voters who came out for these elections by making arbitrary changes to protect those now out of power -- just as it should not be about protecting any incumbent politician. The principles of a fair map that should govern the current redistricting should include moving away from the gerrymandering practice of packing racial and ethnic minority and Democratic party voters into several districts, while diluting their votes elsewhere. It should recognize and unite municipalities and other natural communities of interest wherever possible.

It should both recognize the importance of preserving the empowerment of our Black and Hispanic and other minority citizens, while also giving full reign to their voices in areas of the State where they have not yet been fully recognized. The results of the 2020 Census showed that two North Jersey urban districts -- the 8th and the 10th -- centered on Newark and Jersey City experienced the highest level of population growth in our state. So those gains should be shared with other districts.

A final point -- and here I speak personally, not institutionally for J Street -- I am a resident of the south end of Montclair, now in the 10th District, while the majority of our township is in the 11th. As a single township and thus a clear community of interest, I would respectfully suggest that one piece of the pending puzzle should be to reunite Montclair in the 11th.

The voters of New Jersey urgently need a fair map. I commend you for your dedication and your work on this effort and thank you very much again for this opportunity.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Andrew Sprung, followed by Tammy Thompson.

A N D R E W S P R U N G: Thank you, Judge Wallace, and members of the Commission.

I have been a South Orange resident since 1997. I am a member of (indiscernible) Action. I am grateful that I live in a state in which the redistricting process provides at least a fighting chance to produce a fair map.

A few facts that should inform the creation of a fair map this year are as follows. The 10th and 8th districts are clearly packed, both on an ethnic and partisan basis. Having voted 83 percent and 74 percent of the Democrat, respectively. These districts also gained population in the 2020 Census and are the most overpopulated districts in the state, the 8th exceeding an average district, if all apportionment were equal, by 47,000 and the 10th by 42,000. The packing unfairly dilutes effective representation for the state's Black and Hispanic populations.

Second, the 2011 map, as has been mentioned, was clearly gerrymandered to favor Republicans. The current 12-to-2 split resulted from Democratic candidates outperforming prior partisan divisions in 2018 and 2020, overcoming the Republican tilt in the 3rd, 7th, and 11th districts in particular. The five districts in the state deemed competitive by Cooks standards leaned Republican when the current map was created, while the Democratic-leaning districts had steeper partisan tilts than the Republican

ones. Redistricting should adjust for changes in the population and the partisan slant of the last map, not the most recent congressional results.

Fairness dictates that excess population in the 10th and 8th Districts should be distributed into the 7th and 11th. One logical change would be to move South Orange/Maplewood into the 7th, relieving the excess population and heavy partisan packing to the east, and redressing the partisan boost to Leonard Lance afforded by the 2011 gerrymander.

Minutes about on New Jersey Transit trains, Soma and Millburn share religious congregations, Rahway River Greenway plans, and flood vulnerabilities, and a host of community ties.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Tammy Thompson, followed by Zellie Imani.

Ms. Thompson.

TAMMY THOMPSON: My name is Tammy Thompson, and as a fourth generation resident of Montclair South, I would like to preserve my -- the importance of my vote as a proud Democrat.

I see no benefit in redistricting. I feel this plan will nullify my vote by placing us in historically Republican districts. I would like to ask the Committee to leave things the way they area.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Zellie Imani, followed by Roman Broszkowski.

Zellie Imani.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Zellie Imani is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, thank you.

Roman Broszkowski.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Broszkowski is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you.

Robert Pallante, followed by Howard Teichman.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Pallante is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, Mr. Teichman.

H O W A R D T E I C H M A N: Thank you, Justice Wallace, and Commissioners; and good evening.

My name is Howard Teichman. I am a resident of Bridgewater Township in Somerset County. I have resided in Somerset County for 36 years and in Bridgewater for 34 years. I am a former member of the Bridgewater-Raritan Board of Education, and I am currently the Democratic Municipal Chair in Bridgewater. While my testimony is informed by all of my experiences as a voter and citizen, my opinions are those of myself and not of any organization.

As a resident of Bridgewater, I also reside in the 7th Congressional District. Despite the fact that CD7 was drawn during the last redistricting as a safe Republican district, the voters have twice demonstrated that their values and votes lie with the Democratic candidate.

As a matter of geography, Somerset County sits right in the middle of CD7, with Hunderton County to the west and Union County to the east. Almost right in the middle of Somerset County, landlocked within the County, sits the Township of Bridgewater. It is no coincidence that Bridgewater and our part of Somerset County were included in CD7 10 years

ago. The long history of Somerset County is one of mostly Republican party governors.

Except for the period immediately after Watergate, Republicans had a monopoly on Countywide office. This began to change in 2017. As of the election that year, Republicans held all five commissioner seats, as well as the three constitutional offices. Democrats then began winning elections in Somerset County, and as of now all eight Countywide offices are held by Democrats.

But let us not delude ourselves; none of this has been easy, and some of these elections have been very close. In Bridgewater, where no Democrat has been elected to Township council since 1987, the Republicans were again successful in 2021. However, the Democratic candidates obtained the most votes in any Bridgewater municipal election in history, and our top vote-getter trailed her closest opponent by only 5 percentage points. Voters in Bridgewater and Somerset County continue to trend more democratic, and they should not be punished and they should not be ignored.

As a party activist, I would of course not mind living in a district that could safely send our congressman back to Washington. However, I recognize the reality of this situation. Given the relative state of balance, which the residents of Bridgewater and Somerset County currently enjoy, the idea of the 7th District being redrawn to ensure a Republican victory is quite frankly absurd.

This Commission should reject gerrymandering, and draw the map to fairly reflect the will of the voters in our state and our area.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Ms. Sridharan, followed by Jordana Horn Gordon.

SUBADHRA SRIDHARAN: My name is Subadhra Sridharan, and I have been a resident of Millburn Township for close to a decade now.

I thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify in support of keeping Millburn Township as part of CD7.

When New Jersey was hit by the record rainfall of Hurricane Ida, it resulted in the Rahway River flooding, devastating homes and businesses in my town, and so many of our downstream towns along the Rahway River. The 2020 Water Resources Development Act reinstated the (indiscernible) of Engineers Study of the Rahway River mitigation.

NJ7 is home to almost a dozen municipalities along the Rahway River. When the flooding happened, it was imperative that Millburn receive federal disaster declaration by FEMA. It did not, at first, receive it. Thankfully, we were a part of NJ7, which was one of the worst-hit districts in New Jersey and that helped our town and our congressman make the case for a quick, subsequent review and inclusion of Millburn to be recognized as a disaster zone by FEMA.

With the flooding of the Rahway River becoming (indiscernible) and intense -- as witnessed twice just in the last decade during Irene, and now Ida -- it is essentially that communities that are affected by it stay together so the people in those communities receive fair, seamless, and uniform advocacy and representation at the federal level.

It is important that these communities continue to receive the support that the federal government is currently offering as we are still recovering from Ida. It is imperative that these communities continue to have one voice speak for all future mitigation efforts to, repeat the word,

continuity. It is a key to the success of Millburn and its neighboring towns along the Rahway River.

So I strongly urge the Commissioners to keep Millburn in New Jersey 7, and to not redistrict us to any other congressional district. Doing so would break and reverse the progress we are currently making to mitigate future life-threatening and economically devastating flooding that is a very real possibility.

So while we recover from one flooding and race towards a solution that will help us avoid devastation in the future, we cannot afford to stop, go back, and pick up the pieces again.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to me, and I hope you will make the right choice for Millburn and its residents, which is keeping us in New Jersey 7.

Thank you once again.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Jordana Horn Gordon, followed by Felipe Devila.

JORDANA HORN GORDON: Good evening, Commissioners; I'm Jordana Horn Gordon, thank you very much for hearing my remarks.

I am a lifelong resident of Short Hills, where I live with my husband and six children. My parents still live in the house in Short Hills where I grew up, and I'm very fortunate my sister and her four children live in town as well. I would say that we're lifelong residents of Congressional District 7 except for the fact that, as you know, Millburn-Short Hills has been something of a metaphorical pinball.

Over the course of my lifetime, we've been shot around from district to district -- almost every time that metaphorical pinball plunger of

the census is pulled back. This isn't great for our continuity of representation, of course, and while I do believe that that is very important, it's actually not the focal point of my testimony today. Millburn-Short Hills is the only Essex County town in CD7. I recognize and acknowledge that elephant in the room, and as many who have testified before this Commission have said, if congressional districts shouldn't split towns, then why can they or should they split within a county?

I understand that argument, but I want to make and emphasize what our last speaker said, what I believe is a much more forceful and crucial point in light of the circumstances on the ground here. Millburn-Short Hills is a river community; that river, the Rahway River, does create a community of interest, which would be far more powerful even than county lines in drawing the lines of a congressional district.

In the past two dozen years, we in Millburn-Short Hills have lived through at least two dozen once-in-a-lifetime storms. I've seen ample damage personally from Floyd, from Irene, from Sandy, from Ida, to name only a few of the storms from recent memory. And each one of these storms -- whether they're designated as tropical storms, superstorms, hurricanes -- devastates towns and businesses, and it causes flooding right through the center of our town, Millburn, that impacts homes, stores, schools, and all aspects of life as we know it.

And with each storm, it becomes more and more evident to me how absolutely critical it is to have federal representation that represents the entire Rahway River community, from Hunterdon all the way down to Millburn.

Almost half of the 24 municipalities in the Rahway River Watershed, and 75 percent of the towns on the Mayor's Council of Rahway River Watershed Flood Control, are in CD7. I am very thankful that we're part of CD7 with others who know the ravages of flooding, and that our collective Rahway River voice is heard and represented.

I don't want to echo the points so eloquently made just in the past testimony. I will say, though, that rivers cannot be moved; they can only grow bigger. And the threat posed by them and climate change grows exponentially each year. This problem is not going away, it is only getting bigger. And I want to underscore that this point that I'm making is not just for CD7. While I've told you about my personal experience, I'm also making the more macro point that rivers and bodies of water must be a crucial and critical factor in your redistricting decisions. And that's whether we're talking about CD7 or CD6; whether we're talking about the Rahway River or the Passaic or the Raritan Valley or the Bayshore communities, or the Delaware.

While your Commission does not have the power to redirect rivers or to stop storms, it does have the ability to draw lines and ensure the communities with a coherent and critical issue are able to go to one single legislator and have their voice heard.

Thank you so much for hearing my voice and so many others today, and through the duration of this process in public hearings.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Felipe Devila, followed by Bill Brazell.

Mr. Devila.

Is he present?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, he was present before but he is no longer in the room.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay.

Bill Brazell, followed by Lisa Winkler.

BILL BRAZELL: Thank you, Judge Wallace, and the other members of the Commission.

Jordana Horn Gordon actually put it a lot better than I can, and so I'll be a lot shorter. I just want to agree with what she said, and I want to thank you guys for listening to us.

I walked around our little town of Millburn the day after the massive flooding that took place here as a result of Hurricane Ida on September 1. I'll never forget the destruction that I saw: The mud everywhere, the familiar stores and restaurants that are destroyed. A number of my daughter's classmates had to flee the waters and then find temporary housing for months. Many are still not able to live in their former homes.

Our town of Millburn is incapable of doing, on its own, what needs to be done to protect its residents from future flooding. The Rahway River towns compose a community of interest. We need a congressperson who responds to all of the affected town. If our town is removed from Congressional District 7, who will speak for us in Washington? If a congressional representative has to respond to a number of affected towns, then those towns will be a priority. But if it's just one town, which would happen if Millburn is redistricted, then why should he or she make that a priority?

Please keep Millburn with the other flood-prone towns. Our town cannot afford to protect itself from future flooding. We need a representative in Washington, and we need that representative to care.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Lisa Winkler, followed by John de Yunge.

Ms. Winkler.

L I S A W I N K L E R: Thank you for sponsoring this Hearing on fair districting for the State of New Jersey.

I am a resident of Summit in CD7; I am a member of the League of Women Voters of New Providence, Berkeley Heights, and Summit. In that role, I have conducted voter registration drives, moderated candidate forums, and presented educational programs about the importance of voting in local schools.

As a member of Summit Marches On, I have written hundreds of postcards and made countless telephone calls urging people to register to vote, informing them of the candidate information available on Vote 4-1-1, and reminding them about election day deadlines and dates.

Engagement in voting is the background of our democracy. Redrawing congressional district lines impacts the ability of people to participate in the voting process and often can depress engagement to negative outcomes that work against the ideal of ensuring that as many voters as possible contribute to choosing the representatives.

My experience connecting with voters has shown me that citizens like knowing their vote links them to issues relevant in their communities. Redrawing a fair and competitive district to favor one party or the other

dilutes the voices of subgroups. Breaking up municipalities into different districts, as was done in CD7 in the last map update, fractures communities and hurts common interest. Adding geographic areas that have nothing in common with existing district communities contributes to a sense of disconnection between constituents. Expanding a district's boundaries taxes the congressional representative and staff, making interactions less frequent and their actions more fragmented, losing the synergy that happens when there are commonalities among those they represent.

I urge the Commission to leave the boundaries of CD7 unchanged, and further to consider uniting municipalities Millburn, Scotch Plains, and Fanwood under the same congressional district once again. The more that voters feel valued, the more their engagement increases and the stronger our democracy.

Thank you very much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

John de Yunge, followed by Lawrence Lipschultz.

JOHN de YUNGE: Hi, my name is John de Yunge, and I am a resident of CD7. I would like to thank Justice Wallace and the Commissioners for holding this Hearing and doing the essential, unglamorous hard work of democracy. Thank you for listening to me and all the residents who have offered their testimony.

I came to CD7 17 years ago with my wife, we moved from Manhattan to Summit. We have two kids in our public schools and I've been involved in PTO and boy scouts and volunteering for local elections. As idealistic as it might sound, I think that one of our community's greatest assets is trust -- in government, and in each other.

Of course, we disagree, but fundamentally we believe in the good faith of our electoral process and our neighbors for evidence that point to our District's closely contested congressional election last cycle. Despite the stakes, despite the narrow margin, we avoided the kind of rancor seen in so many other parts of the country.

Yet, nationally, only 36 percent of Democrats and 9 percent of Republicans say they can trust government. On both sides, people feel the system is fixed; that their voices don't count. One of the causes is gerrymandering by both sides, dividing disenfranchising communities of interest to ensure that one party has a built-in systemic advantage. Drawing district lines that defy geographic and common sense.

As you complete your work, I urge you to preserve communities of interest and draw the district lines fairly based on census data. Just as important, please be transparent to the public about your decision-making process, draft maps, and decision-making rationales so that we can all understand, and trust, the basis of the redistricting. Failing to do so would likely lead to the kind of division and conflict that we see in other parts of the country.

Trust is gained in drops, but lost in buckets.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Lawrence Lipschultz, followed by Ketan Bhuptani.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Lipschultz is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, thank you.

Ketan Bhuptani.

K E T A N B H U P T A N I: My name is Ketan Bhuptani, I am from Livingston Township in Essex County. And thank you very much for allowing me to testify today. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the Commissioners and the representatives of this Commission for this critical work. This is an amazing service to our community, and I appreciate all your transparency here.

As of my quick interaction, I am an active community member of Essex and Morris County. And I actually work in a lot of areas within the county. I am a zoning board member of Livingston Township, and I also am a founding member of an Indian American community organization that has 2,200 families represented across 13 townships which me and my friends made in 2005.

The reason for all this introduction is, from that vantage point, I've seen how the Indian American communities have grown in a variety of townships in and around Livingston. We share equal values, as the community has a similar type of issues represented by two or three different congressional members. Which creates an issue because there is no singular escalation for us. That's our challenge, that we are represented by different congressional men and women. It's really a challenge, as we are not able to funnel and our communities in different townships are getting marginalized.

That brings me to what we are thinking; what my thought process here is. I would highly recommend West Orange, South Orange, (indiscernible), Maplewood -- which has a tremendous amount of Indian American community that falls under different congressional districts, which does not align with the large population within Livingston and Parsippany that has a pretty significant amount of Indian American population.

It is that rapid growth of Indian American representation which brings me to my point. It is my request to have all of these townships to be under NJ11 and help us create a voice right now that's getting marginalized, and give us an equal representation.

So thank you once again for your due diligence in this transferring process, and I truly appreciate all this public service work that you're doing.

Thank you for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments, sir.

Morgan Conley, followed by Diane Tolkowsky.

Ms. Conley.

MORGAN CONLEY: Good evening; apologies for the delay.

My name is Morgan Conley, and I'm a National Organizer at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. The Lawyers' Committee is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization formed in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to involve the private bar in providing legal services to address racial discrimination.

As states across the country continue their redistricting process and select maps for the decade ahead, the Lawyers' Committee's goal is to ensure the creation of racially equitable maps that provide communities of color with fair access to the political process. We encourage the New Jersey Congressional Redistricting Commission to draw fair maps that represent the changing demographics of New Jersey and provide communities of color the voice and power they deserve under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the U.S. Constitution.

In drafting new plans, we urge this Commission to draw plans that accurately reflect the sizable growth and the population of people of color in the state. The white percentage of the electorate has suddenly decreased between 2010 and 2020, while the percentage of the electorate of people of color has steadily increased.

New Jersey's population growth has been overwhelming concentrated among communities of color. People of color now make up over 48 percent of the population, a sizeable increase of 40 percent from 2010. This population growth makes the state one of the most diverse in the country -- more diverse than New York, Florida, or Georgia.

Despite the diversity of this state, white communities have historically been overrepresented in congressional districts. During the last redistricting cycle, New Jersey was over 40 percent people of color, yet 75 percent of the districts were majority white. The congressional map that was certified had just one majority Black district, one majority Latino district, and one plurality district.

It is imperative that this Commission not minimize the collective voting power of communities of color at the expense of democracy. We need legislative maps that include input from voters of color to ensure these communities receive fair representation and an equitable amount of federal resources. For far too long, these communities have been locked out of the process, but you have an opportunity to make sure that is not the case this year. The Commission should be especially focused on taking into account communities of interest.

This is essential to protecting the rights of voters, and allowing voters in a geographic area to have autonomy. Not only does considering

communities of interest help to ensure that the voting power of communities of color is not diluted in violation of the Voting Rights Act, but doing so also ensures that voters are at the heart of this process. It allows voters to elect representatives who are responsive to their communities needs. Redistricting should focus on communities and voters, not politicians and maintaining incumbent political power.

New Jersey's historic voter turnout in the 2020 primary and general election, all during a pandemic, demonstrates the incredible length New Jerseyans will go in order to meaningfully participate in their democracy. This Commission must demonstrate its willingness to secure the voting rights of all New Jerseyans by providing voters, especially voters of color, the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.

New districts should be drawn to reflect the fact that New Jersey's population growth has been overwhelmingly concentrated among communities of color. And as much as possible, the Commission's plan should preserve whole communities of interest and provide communities of color with the voice and power they deserve under the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution.

In short, the New Jersey Congressional Redistricting Commission must enact fair redistricting plans that allow voters to elect candidates of their choice, instead of allowing elected officials to select their constituents.

Thank you for taking the time tonight and for the work that you do.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Diane Tolkowsky, followed by Hannah Korn-Heilner.

Ms. Tolkowsky.

DIANE TOLKOWSKY: Good evening; I am Diane Tolkowsky, and I am a 30-year resident of Morristown in CD11.

First of all, I want to thank you for granting me time to express my thoughts about redistricting as a resident of Morristown. I know you have been through a lot of hearings and are towards the end of them, so out of respect for your time I promise to keep this short, sweet, and to the point.

I believe the redistricting process should help a community secure meaningful representation from their elected officials for the needs and issues that effect their everyday life. The district lines should respect the will of the voters. In this district that will -- that need, that fight -- is primarily for a better public transportation. The Gateway Tunnel is a prime example.

By keeping the district lines as they currently stand as much as possible, and with the addition of other connected commuter towns, they can ensure elected officials represent the district's shared needs and will fight for their concerns. Commuter towns have similar legislative interests and will benefit from common representation in the government.

Living in Morristown, we are on the direct path into New York City with businesses all along the way dependent on commuters for their existence. It is imperative that the needs and challenges of these constituents are heard and fought for. It is imperative that this elected official's constituents share common needs and issues. Long daily commutes -- among the highest in the state -- are due in part to outdated and crumbling infrastructure. The district lines should be drawn to reflect these common needs. This goes beyond party affiliation. NJ11 communities are diverse,

but largely bound together by the shared challenges of commutation for working families.

These are our communities of interest, and the new boundaries should reflect the interests of this group. We have made great strides in the area of public transportation and infrastructure, and drawing CD11 boundaries to reflect this interest group, our representative can continue to fight for these common issues: Public transportation and infrastructure for working families.

Thank you again for your time this evening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Hannah Korn-Heilner, followed by Julie DeLoca.

HANNAH KORN - HEILNER: Hello. Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight.

My name is Hannah Korn-Heilner, and I live in South Orange but was born and raised in Montclair. I testified a month ago in support of keeping the south end of Montclair in the 10th Congressional District, but felt compelled again to speak again on this issue as I'm concerned with the arguments being made to move this historically Black neighborhood into the 11th Congressional District with the rest of Montclair.

The main argument being made, that uniting Montclair into a community of interest would help address issues such as train service, is deeply flawed. For instance, 20 years ago Montclair accepted a plan to build the new Montclair-Boonton Train Line that created a direct service into New York City. To build this new line, Montclair agreed to allow 30 homes in the lower end of Montclair to be knocked down. The creation of this new line,

along with redevelopment of the train station in the South End, further contributed to gentrification that has continue to push out Black residents.

In 2000, just a few years before the Montclair-Boonton Line opened, about 32 percent of Montclair residents were Black. In the 20 years since the line was build, the Black population in Montclair has dropped to 25 percent. And the old train line that was discontinued when the Montclair-Boonton Line was built is now being turned into the Essex-Hudson Green Line. Meanwhile, the residents of the South End of Montclair have been without a grocery store for over five years.

A united Montclair is not a community of interest, as the issues impacting the Black residents of the South End are vastly different than the concerns of white and wealthier residents living in the rest of Montclair. And if the history of Montclair is any indication, the interests of white and wealthier residents will constantly be prioritized over the needs of Black residents. Unifying the town into the 11th Congressional District would just continue to further marginalize Black residents.

I urge this Commission to keep the South End of Montclair in the 10th Congressional District with the sister communities in East Orange and Newark who have far more in common to ensure Montclair's Black residents have fair representation that will reflect their interests in congress.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Julie DeLoca, followed by Marcella Simadiris.

JULIE DeLOCA: Good evening, my name is Julie DeLoca and I have lived in Millburn-Short Hills for 17 years. I have two children who have been

through the public schools here. My business is registered here, and I work from my home.

Over the 17 years that I've lived here, I have gone through multiple once-in-a-lifetime scale of floods, hurricanes, and power outages. Most recently, when Tropical Storm Ida hit, my neighborhood was devastated. I went downtown the morning after the flood to help with any local cleanup efforts. I can't forget the wreckage that I saw on Millburn Avenue, our main street. The street and floors of stores drenched in water and caked in mud, inventory and facilities completely destroyed. I walked into one store on Millburn Avenue -- Garden State Hemp -- and the three owners were sitting there crying. They didn't know what to do, and like many other new businesses, they didn't have flood insurance.

I helped them clean up, and many others from the community came in and they did seem to feel a little bit better. Later I got together with a friend and neighbor, Wendy (indiscernible), to create a fundraiser fashion show to help those local businesses. It was inspired by the photo you may have seen in the *New York Times* of the formal dresses destroyed by the mud. We wore them at our fashion show, it was called "The Millburn Mud Ball," and it was very helpful to the community.

This most recent disaster has made it very clear to me that our District is tied to other districts by the Rahway River, the river that overran its banks most recently with Ida and is most likely to keep doing so in the future. We can't move our town's center from the river that it was built around, and I would argue that we shouldn't move our congressional district from being a part of the community of interest that the river, especially in light of increased flooding, creates.

We need one voice in federal government to speak for us, and the other river communities in CD7 so that we can get the swift aid and assistance we need and will need in future disasters.

Thank you for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Marcella Simadiris -- excuse me if I mispronounce that -- followed by Roberta Blitz.

Marcella.

Is she available, Marcella Simadiris?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Marcella Simadiris was here earlier, but she is no longer here.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Blitz, Roberta Blitz?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Roberta Blitz is not here.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Robert Grant.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Grant is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Semaj Vanzant.

S E M A J V A N Z A N T, SR: Semaj Vanzant, present and accounted for.

Thank you, Judge Wallace and members of the New Jersey Congressional Redistricting Commission for holding these Public Hearings and allowing me to give my testimony here on today.

My name is Dr. Semaj Vanzant Sr. and I have been the Pastor at Second Baptist Church of Asbury Park for the last five years and counting. Today, I want to speak to the importance and connection of the Black communities of Asbury Park and Neptune Township, and the reason why

these two towns should be joined together within the 6th Congressional District.

Our church, which is located just off of Springwood Avenue in the southwest corner of Asbury Park, is just a few blocks from the Neptune Township border. The parishioners of our church are largely made up of residents to both Asbury Park and Neptune. Like all churches, Second Baptist is not just a place for people to worship, but an extension of the community, providing a safe place for people and help the community to support one another and improve their lives and neighborhoods.

While I am not a native son of this area, I have seen firsthand the connection of these two special towns, especially the intergenerational bonds of my congregants. Many families reside within both communities and face similar challenges. These connections are not limited to my church, but the larger communities of color within Monmouth County.

For generations, Neptune Township and Asbury Park -- both towns that are minority majority -- have always been a part of the same congressional district. It wasn't until the 2012 reapportionment that these two communities of interest were separated, effectively diluting the voice of the Black and brown communities of Monmouth County. Neptune was moved out of the 6th Congressional District and put into the 4th, where almost 75 percent of the population is white. In contrast, the 6th Congressional District includes many minority majority towns like Asbury Park, Long Branch, New Brunswick, and Perth Amboy, among others.

As someone who has preached around the country and world, and as an advocate for social justice, I have seen firsthand the exercise to disenfranchise Black and brown voters and diminish our voice through both

policy and legislative redistricting efforts like these. I implore this body to once again join Neptune with Asbury Park and the other 6th Congressional District towns so our voices are properly represented in congress.

Thank you for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments, sir.

Robert Grant, did Robert Grant -- is he present?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Robert Grant is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, thank you.

Melinda Opper. Linda Opper.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Melinda Opper is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Amy Freitag.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Amy Freitag is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Bruce Esrig.

B R U C E E S R I G: Yes, present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: You may proceed.

MR. ESRIG: My name is Bruce Esrig, a resident of Madison, New Jersey, which is currently in the 11th Congressional District.

I am very happy with my current representative, Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill. I find that she listens to her constituents and represents our interests in congress. I would refer you to the written testimony so I can read more freely; I have a couple additional remarks.

My purpose in speaking to you today is to advocate for fair maps. It would be unfair if a map concentrated constituencies or diluted constituencies, so that their opinions are not represented. And it does matter

that a map of districts be fair -- maybe these points are said differently from the way others have said them, because we need to make sure that peoples' opinions are heard and taken into account. That gives people faith in democracy.

We need to make sure that our society will be more successful, and we can talk productively about issues that we all have in common, which helps us be successful. And we want to be able to look ourselves in the mirror and to be able to tell our children that we did the right thing.

Diluting the power of the votes of people who might disagree creates a society that no one wants to live in. So if you accept these points about fairness and take them to heart and act upon them, we will end up with a fair result -- if not, we will not end up with a fair result.

Going beyond my written testimony, I would like to say that considering groups that have common interests is preferable, compared to considering groups that have common identities. An issue focus leads to more constructive debates than an identity focus.

On the subject of infrastructure, which matters a lot in CD11, Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill has been very vocal. We do need comprehensive attention to infrastructure for long haul commuting and short distance transportation, so that goods can get to customers efficiently, and also that people can get to places where their services are needed.

CD11 is a District that can advocate for this need. I urge you to plan to keep within CD11 those who have in common a commitment to advocate for regional transportation solutions.

Thank you very much for hearing my testimony today. It is an honor for me to speak to you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much for your comments, sir.

Adrian Orozco.

ADRIAN OROZCO: Hello. Good evening, Commission members; my name is Adrian Orozco, and I am grateful for this opportunity to testify.

This Commission has the awesome opportunity and responsibility to draw a map that is representative of the will of the electorate, and we urge the Commission to draw fair and competitive districts. Hyper-partisan politics has taken over our democracy, and this Commission is instrumental in providing the voters the opportunity to choose their representative in a fair process.

It is also critical that the Commission, to the best extent possible, maintain communities of interest and districts. Communities of interest can comprise anything from houses of worship to transit lines, and disrupting communities of interest can have a severely negative impact on residents. This Commission should respect existing communities of interest so that the needs of residents are met by their representative.

I am a Latino living in the 12th Congressional District. I was not born and raised in this District; however, I am proof that there is a growing minority population. District 12 is a majority minority district, which means minorities are the biggest population. There is a Latino plurality among minorities, which sees Latinos as 23.8 percent. The white population in the district is in the minority. However, it's still the largest group, at 42.1 percent.

This District represents parts of four counties: Middlesex, Mercer, Somerset, and Union, with a total of 31 municipalities. Various parts

of the District are connected via Interstate 95, State Route 18, and Route 130. We have health services, great educational institutions like Princeton -- and, more importantly, the District is home to our state's capital city, Trenton. During the six months I have been living in District 12, I noticed diversity in various ways. We have Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and many other types of religious houses of worship.

Our community is serviced by organizations like the YMCA, various youth advocacy groups, food pantries, community-based de-escalation programs, and immigration programs, Catholic charities, and legal programs such as the Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund. These services are integral to the success of the community. Both the government and the community have made a lot of investments into the District, and currently constituents are reaping the benefits and will continue to.

That is why I also support the racial equity map produced by the Fair Districts Coalition. This map took data directly provided by the Census Bureau, which depicted the growth in the minority population in New Jersey. This map ensures that the districts like Congressional District 12 and my former district, District 8, accurately represent the residents of these districts. It's important to note that New Jersey's minority population is currently at 48 percent. It's very possible that the number is higher due to the wording of the Census' question on racial identity.

In August of 2021, the Census Bureau released a statement acknowledging this. The following is a direct excerpt from the Census website: "We are confident that the differences in the overall racial

distributions are largely due to the improvements and the design of two separate questions for race, data collection, and processing, as well as some demographic changes over the past 10 years.” This practically means that these numbers are higher.

And now I'll conclude. A redistricting process founded on transparency and public input is one that is driven by the consensus of New Jersey as voters. And thus far the Commission in its numerous public hearings, both in-person and remote, has adhered to that goal. After public hearings have closed, we urge the Commission to continue its transparency in the map making process and share the criteria and principles to make the congressional map.

I want to thank the Commission for their time and for allowing me to speak.

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

Does Susan Blackburn wish to make a comment? You are registered, but I did not see where you wanted to speak.

S U S A N B L A C K B U R N: Thank you so much and thank you so much for this opportunity. I've viewed several of the hearings, and I'm continually impressed with the thoughtfulness and good faith demonstrated by all of the participants.

I would only ask if you could possibly make public the maps that you will be drawing, or the math, so that there can be public comment on it before a decision is made. I've heard so many interesting ideas about communities of interest and things I hadn't thought about before, and I just would love, I would hope that we could have these maps be public and then comment on them before you make a decision.

I live in the CD7 and we've had several proposals tonight that have been very creative. And I'm happy with the District the way it is, but if we could have more towns in it that are in affinity with our District, that would be even better.

Thank you so much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Raysa, do we have any others that I have not called? I know I called several names that did not appear, has anyone else come back?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Zellie Imani is present, and we have a few more who are present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, Zellie Imani.

Mr. Imani.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: I see him present, but he is not responding right now.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, anyone else do you have?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I have Sandra Galdamez.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Sandra Galdamez, please come on and present us with your testimony.

S A N D R A G A L D A M E Z: Good afternoon Commission members, and thank you for allowing me to testify on (indiscernible).

As you know, the Commission has a responsibility to draw congressional lines that depict fair and competitive districts. When reviewing and data collaborating on new district lines, I ask that you remember to maintain communities of interest in districts throughout the states. Disrupting communities of interest can have a severe negative impact on

residents. Keeping these communities is vital to these communities, which will aid the New Jersey economy.

I'm a Latina living in the 12th Congressional District. I stand here today showing this Commission that there is proof that there is a growing minority population in this state. More specific, living here in the U.S.A. that as a permanent-- Sorry. District 12. I left El Salvador 1993. I was sponsored with my mother, who was living here in the U.S.A. as a permanent resident. I now currently live in the district with two American-born daughters and currently expecting a third child.

I would like to highlight that I'm raising my family alone, as my husband was deported back in 2012. I mention this because even though immigration services can be found within my district, it could use additional resources.

Currently, District 12 has a Latino plurality in a minority community. Latino make up 23.8 percent of the (indiscernible) population. This is significant, it shows that not only is -- it's a district, it's a minority population with a district growing. But Latinos are choosing to live here in this district. If (indiscernible) indicate that these numbers will only continue to grow. The District represents 31 municipalities, which spans over four counties. We are connected to other parts of the District via 95, Route 18 and Route 130. Princeton University, a private ivy, (indiscernible) can be found within the District. We are also home to Trenton, New Jersey, the capital.

Our District's diversity can be reflected in religious houses of worship, such as temples, Baptist church, Catholics, and other non-denominational churches. This District 12 has a sense of community, and

we organize like YMCA (indiscernible) the Latin American Legal Defense and educational funds give back to this community. This is possible because of the current resources being invested into the district.

I urge this Commission to look, analyze that, or compare it with the fair district racial. I urge this Commission to look at (indiscernible) map. This map reflects an equitable breakdown of the demographics across the state. Furthermore, I am asking the Commission to consider that there are minorities in the districts that have not been properly identified. The following is a direct excerpt from the Census government website: “We are confident that the differences in the overall racial distributions are largely due to the improvements and the design of two separate questions for race, data collection, and processing, as well as some demographic changes over the past 10 years.” Census government, August 12, 2021, press release.

A transparent process with the ability to listen to the public’s input in one of the (indiscernible) consensus in New Jersey voters. Thus far this Commission’s numerous public hearings, both in-person and remote, has adhered to this goal. We urge the Commission to consider their maps prior to (indiscernible) and having more public hearings where residents can give feedback to the Commission.

I want to thank the Commission for their time and allowing me to speak. This redistricting process founded on transparency and public input. One of the (indiscernible) by the consensus of New Jersey voters. Thus, (indiscernible) Commission is (indiscernible) public hearings both in person-- We urge the Commission to continue transparency, not making (indiscernible) and share that criteria and principles to make the new congressional map.

I want to thank Commissioners for their time and allowing me to speak.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Now I have several who registered, but--

Z E L L I E I M A N I: Yes, excuse me, Zellie Imani is here. I was here, but I missed you call me.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, please; you may proceed.

MR. IMANI: Thank you so much.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak. My name is Zellie Imani. I am a Co-Founder of Black Lives Matter Patterson, and a leader of Black Lives Matter Patterson as well as an activist for the larger Black Lives Matter movement.

In 1870, the 15th Amendment was ratified to prohibit states from denying a male citizen the right to vote based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Being of color, and Black people specifically, have been fighting to make sure their vote counts ever since. One hundred and fifty one years after the ratification of the 15th Amendment, Black communities are fighting to ensure that their vote counts.

It's not enough to provide access to polling sites free from the threats of physical violence. It's not enough. Erasing the impact of your vote is violence. Enough.

Cold red practices include packing, which is putting all the Black voters in one district so their sole majority district is outvoted by all the others; cracking, which is spreading the Black voters among all the districts so they never have a majority in any of them; and stacking, which is putting

Black voters into one district that is still populated by enough white people to ensure Blacks can't form a majority. These practices aren't to strengthen democracy, but to weaken the Black vote. These practices are ones that improve equality, but suppresses the vote of marginalized communities.

You can do all of the voting, but if the people have manipulated the mind to where your vote doesn't effectively matter, then how do you get better schools? Better roads? Better healthcare? Criminal justice reform? Maps can be drawn to either aid communities of color, to have a voice, or designed to drown them out.

What is happening now is an attempt to drown out the voices of communities of color. Voters -- especially those in the most marginalized and vulnerable communities -- need the ability to vote for representatives who they believe can improve their conditions. This is what improves the conditions of marginalized communities. This is what improves the conditions of this country. This is what benefits the country -- not drawing unfair maps.

I again thank you for your time, and I deeply hope that you consider my words and the words of all the other speakers that have spoken so far today.

Thank you.

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

Raysa, do you have any others that I have not called or may have come back into the--

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman. We have Mr. Orlando Ovalles.

ORLANDO OVALLES: Yes, I am here.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, give me--

MR. OVALLES: Hello, everyone. Good afternoon, Commissioners.

My name is Orlando Ovalles and I am the Northeast Director of Civic Engagement for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials -- NALEO Educational Fund. This organization is the nation's leading nonprofit nonpartisan organization that facilitates full Latino participation in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.

We are advocating across the nation for redistricting processes which result in maps that provide Latinos and other underrepresented groups with a fair opportunity to elect leaders who are responsive and accountable to their communities. We thank you for all your work and commitment to a participatory redistricting process as you gather public input.

I am here today to provide recommendations on how the Commission can ensure the public has meaningful opportunities to provide public input on the Commission's maps and the criteria the Commission should comply with when developed in these maps.

We first urge the Commission to conduct an accessible, inclusive, and transparent redistricting process. We respectfully request that the Commission continue to host regional hearings, including public discussions of draft maps. Our communities deserve the first shot to provide feedback while engaging with the redistricting process. We urge the Commission to consider language and accessibility in any additional public input it receives. Language and accessibility is just one of the many historical barriers to civic participation in the Latino community.

For the Commission to have the best possible information about communities and interest and related issues, it is imperative that residents be able to understand and participate in the Commission's activities, even if they have limited English proficiency. For this reason, providing interpretation and translation support for Latinos and other language minorities in the state is crucial. The Commission simply cannot obtain the full range of perspectives it needs for meaningful engagement without providing translation and interpretation services.

Given the large number of Spanish-dominant Latinos in the state, we recommend that moving forward you provide Spanish language translation and interpretation for the Commission's website and future public meetings. You should also ensure that members of the public can provide written testimony in Spanish, and that such testimony is translated for the Commission to understand. Meaningful engagement with the public requires a two-way flow of information.

Furthermore, it is critical that the maps that result from your redistricting process comply with the provisions set forth in the United States Constitution and the Federal Voting Rights Act. To meet these requirements, we urge the Commission to incorporate the growth of the Latino community over the last decade. According to Census 2020 data, Latinos now comprise 21.6 percent of New Jersey's population, up from 17.7 percent in 2010. Latino population growth outpaced the overall increase in New Jersey's population between 2010 and 2020.

While New Jersey's population grew by 5.7 percent, the Latino population grew by 28.8 percent. It is crucial that the maps produced by the Commission reflect the growth of the Latino community, thus ensuring that

Latinos achieve a fair representation by having the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice through new district lines.

Finally, we recommend for the Commission to draw lines that respect Latino communities of interest. These lines must keep communities together that share similar needs and concerns.

We hope that these recommendations will be useful and seriously considered during the remaining phases of the Commission's efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and your attention to our comments. We look forward to continuing our work together to ensure a fair and transparent redistricting process in New Jersey.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Michelle Delisfort, is Ms. Delisfort--

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, we have four more speakers present that I can see. They are Mr. Luis De La Hoz, Mr. Paul Erdheim, Ms. Doreen Green, and Mr. Christian Pimentel.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, would you please call them in the order you just gave me.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Okay.

Mr. Luis De La Hoz.

L U I S D e L a H O Z: Thank you, Justice Wallace and members of the Congressional Redistricting Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Luis De La Hoz, and I currently serve as a Chairman of the New Jersey State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, representing over

120,000 Hispanic-owned businesses, contributing over \$20,000,000,000 dollars to the State economy.

I come before you today to urge you, the Commission, to ensure the equitable and fair representation of Latinos in the new congressional map. During the 2020 Census, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce played an integral role in advocating for a fair county, and encouraged our membership and communities to not only complete the census, but drive participation into the count.

We engaged in these activities because the census will allow our state and the Latino community to have our fair share of federal resources and, more importantly, demonstrate the vast growth of our community in New Jersey. Despite the controversies of this process that were designed to disenfranchise Latinos here in New Jersey, we succeeded as the Latino population grew to more than 20 percent, or almost one of every five New Jerseyans.

These extraordinary results demonstrate that the Latino community has been and continues to be a fundamental voice in New Jersey, whose needs cannot be ignored. But our growth is not worth it; it means nothing if it cannot be translated into political representation in the new congressional map. Accurate representation means that this Commission will use the census results to create a map with districts that are competitive, and where Latino voters will have the opportunity to elect a representative attuned of their needs.

Moreover, I urge the Commission to avoid packing and cracking our community in the map making process. Packing and cracking will only serve to disenfranchise Latino voters and dilute or political power in New

Jersey. Instead, the Commission should focus its effort on creating majority minority and influenced districts that ensure Latinos have their representation that they earned in the (indiscernible) census. Regardless of changed district that account for our population growth and our communities of interest are those that our communities need to see in the new map.

This Commission has the historic opportunity to empower the Latino community for the next 10 years and the (indiscernible) gerrymandered map will be a tremendous disservice. I implore you to follow fair redistricting principles and listen to the voices of our 1.7 million New Jerseyans who participated in the census in the hopes that it will make a real difference for their community.

Thank you very much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you, sir.

Raysa, you may call the next witness.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The next speaker is Paul Erdheim.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Mr. Erdheim. (no response)

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: He was here earlier, but he is no longer present.

The next speaker on the list is Ms. Doreen Green.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Doreen Green?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: It looks like she also is no longer present.

The next speaker would be Christian Pimentel.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Christian Pimentel.

C H R I S T I A N P I M E N T E L: Hello.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: He's here.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Yes, Christian, you may proceed.

MR. PIMENTEL: Good evening Commission members; thank you for giving me this opportunity to tell about my community.

My name is Christian Pimentel, and I am a Latino living in Congressional District 9 with my family. CD9 represents 35 municipalities and spans over 3 counties -- Passaic, Bergen, and two parts of Hudson County. This District is considered a majority minority district. That means racial minorities make up most of this district, with Latinos having plurality in this District. Latinos make up 40.9 percent of the population in CD9. Whites are in the overall minority and are behind Latinos in total populations at 37.9 percent.

This District has a network of hospitals to ensure health needs are met, mental health services, as well as some immigration services. In Patterson, you can find pro bono legal services as well as programs catered to services returning citizens. There are food pantries that can be found across the District, as well as other community-based programs.

As a Latino in CD9, I can say that I am proud that this District has a sense of community. If this District was drawn any other way, this sense of community may no longer be there. I have been living in Cliffside Park for eight years. My wife and I decided to raise our family here. We have a nine-year-old daughter and plan to have more. We made more decisions because of the services provided in this district, that sense of community I previously mentioned. Keeping CD9 district lines will continue to allow economic growth within this District.

Another point I would like to highlight is that CD9 offers constituents competitive elections. We have the ability to vote for candidates of our choice. I just need to stress that having this luxury of competitive elections to keep our representative accountable to us. I am urging this Commission to adhere to a transparent process and keep in mind that CD9 has communities of interest together. These communities have connected via houses of worship, (indiscernible) as well as cultural connection.

Lastly, I ask the Commission to consider the data released by the Census Bureau and support the Fair Redistricting Coalition's racial equality map. This map accurately reflects the demographics throughout the state.

And I would like to thank the Commission again for this opportunity to testify on my community.

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

Raysa, do you have any others waiting?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, I don't have any other speakers on my list.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right. It appears that although we were doing the right thing by dividing up the list and asking you Commission members to come back on Thursday evening, I'm sorry if it has caused an excessive strain on you. But I'm grateful and thankful for your agreeing to come back Thursday.

We will continue the list of approximately 40 others that I have on my list for Thursday evening at 6:00 pm. This is a continuing list of those that were on the list for tonight. We had about 10 that did not appear, although they were requested to testify; somehow they registered but then did not appear.

Is there any other comment that anyone has before we seek to adjourn? (no response)

Hearing none, do I have a motion to adjourn?

MR. STEINHARDT: Motion.

MS. FULLER: Second.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Moved and second.

All in favor say aye.

ALL: Aye.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much.

I look forward to seeing you Thursday for the continuation of this ninth hearing.

Thank you and stay safe.

(MEETING RECESSED)

(MEETING RESUMED)

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you, and welcome to the continuing ninth Public Hearing of the Redistricting Commission.

We are grateful that you are able to continue to join us. We recognize that due to the large number that we had for Monday's session, we asked you to continue until tonight; and you were gracious enough to be able to do that, and we thank you for that. I thank both the Commission members and the public generally.

As I stated before, ordinarily we would allow five minutes for the presentation, but because we still have a large number of speakers this

evening, we would recommend that you limit your comments to three minutes, please.

That being said, Madam Secretary, would you please take the roll.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Redd.

MS. REDD: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Pagliughi.

MS. PAGLUIGHI: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Nash.

MR. NASH: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner LoGrippe.

MR. LoGRIPPO: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Lagos.

MS. LAGOS: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Gopal.

SENATOR GOPAL: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Duffy.

He may be a little late tonight.

Commissioner Delgado.

MS. DELGADO: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Ashmore.

MS. ASHMORE: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Albano.

MS. ALBANO: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Republican Chair Steinhardt.

MR. STEINHARDT: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Democratic Chair Fuller.

MS. FULLER: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: And Chair Wallace.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Here.

Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Before we begin with the speakers, does anyone wish to make a comment this evening?

MS. FULLER: Chairman, thank you.

On behalf of all of the Commissioners and the Democratic Commissioners, I thank everyone, as you mentioned, for joining us today. And I just want to take a moment also to thank the OLS staff for all the work that they've done to put together all these hearings, to make the public input possible for us Commissioners to hear over these past months.

So thank you to that team.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you.

MR. STEINHARDT: Thank you.

I would join the Chairwoman Fuller's expression of gratitude. Thank you to OLS, Chairman, to your staff; I appreciate the opportunity. I'm glad we're coming to the end here, the public hearings. I look forward to the next phase and want to welcome everybody to our last meeting.

So thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. STEINHARDT: Thank you, Judge.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Our first speaker this evening is Roman Broszkowski.

Mr. Broszkowski.

R O M A N B R O S Z K O W S K I: Hello, Chair, and the rest of the Redistricting Commission.

I am presenting today three testimonies on behalf of people who could not currently be here. I will read the names of the people prior to each of their testimonies, and I will keep it short.

First up is Marcella Simadiris. The name is spelled M-A-R-C-E-L-L-A; the last name S-I-M-A-D-I-R-I-S.

“Hello, my name is Marcella Simadiris. I have decided to present my testimony today as a resident of Montclair, and to voice my firm opposition to the current proposals to push all of Montclair into the 11th Congressional District. The Black and brown community of Montclair has long been ignored and marginalized. I do not feel like my current representative does a good job advocating on my interests -- but I strongly doubt that Mikie Sherrill would do a better job, considering the make-up of her district.

“New Jerseyans of color deserve accurate representation and strong political power. Instead, they have been repeatedly talked down to and demeaned. In Montclair, you heard a lot about the racial achievement gap, and I have heard some arguing that unifying Montclair in the 11th would help solve this issue. I have never heard something so insulting and so infuriating before. In our town, white residents have repeatedly undermined much of the work that groups like the National Independent Black Parent Association, Montclair Chapter, have done to end the achievement gap.

“And now those same white advocates want to pretend like they care about ending it. Where were they when Superintendent Nathan Parker was vocally giving racists a pass as long as it didn't affect their teaching? The

blunt truth is that white Montclair has never cared about the interests of Black Montclair. They do not form a united community of interest, regardless of what some people might say.

“I strongly urge the Commission to not crack apart working class Black communities and attach them to vastly different populations. I ask the Commission to keep Southern Montclair in the 10th District and to remain dedicated to accurate representation for all of New Jersey’s residents.”

The next testimony comes from Anthony Diaz. A-N-T-H-O-N-Y; last name Diaz, D-I-A-Z.

“While Democrats posture as the party for African Americans, in Essex County they joined the efforts of Republicans all over the country to rob Black people of their vote at the ballot box. The push by political insiders to move Montclair into the 11th Congressional District over the objections of the Black community of the South End and 4th Ward is just gerrymandering with blue paint. Cracking Black communities of interest will accomplish nothing but dilute Black voting power and rob Black Montclair residents of accurate representation.

“I am asking the Redistricting Commission to firmly oppose any move to hurt minority voters, and to ensure that Black communities like the ones that currently make up the 10th District, including Southern Montclair, stay together.”

And the last testimony comes from Ms. Beverly Bussey. Beverly is B-E-V-E-R-L-Y, and last name is B-U-S-S-E-Y.

“Good afternoon. I am Ms. Beverly Bussey, a longtime resident of East Orange in New Jersey’s 10th Congressional District. I offer this statement in opposition to the redistricting proposal, which seeks to split

Black communities of interest by transferring Southern Montclair from the 10th to the 11th District.

“I resided in the State of New Jersey my entire life, and actively engaged in community service most of my adult life. I am a registered voter who actively participates in the electoral process. With that in mind, I think that this redistricting plan is a major disservice to underserved populations who are already struggling in terms of affordable housing, quality education, and equity in healthcare services.

“This is, in my mind, another form of disenfranchisement, because the services these communities would otherwise be entitled to would be further diminished and muffled under the more affluent communities.

“I would urge our elected officials to consider these facts before redrawing legislative lines that would further divide our communities, particularly in times of economic hardship.”

Thank you, Commission, for hearing our testimonies today.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Leslie Bockol.

LESLIE BOCKOL: Hi, thank you very much.

My name is Leslie Bockol; thanks for the opportunity to share my perspective with you this evening. I would like to speak first as Co-Executive Director of the grassroots group NJ 11th for Change, and then in a more personal capacity as a resident of West Orange for nearly 15 years.

NJ 11th for Change is an unaffiliated CD11-based organization. We're 8,000 members strong and we work towards a government that's transparent, responsive, and accountable. These redistricting hearings are an

admirable step towards these goals, but we fear that this transparency, and responsiveness, and accountability are really for naught, unless the maps drafted by this Commission are shared publicly, unless constituents and communities of interest are given an opportunity to publicly voice their concerns, and unless the maps can be revised in light of those concerns before they go to a vote.

NJ 11th for Change strongly urges the Commission to adjust the process to allow these important steps so that the citizens of New Jersey can have as much faith in the process and its end results as possible. In these turbulent times, with so much distrust in government, our voters deserve that.

Next, speaking personally as a West Orange citizen, taxpayer, County committee member, and public school parent for nearly 15 years, I have opinions about how CD11 borders are redrawn. West Orange public school buildings are, by and large, gracious, charming, and very, very old. They are early mid-20th century old. Eleanor Roosevelt spoke at the groundbreaking for one of our middle schools -- for Roosevelt Middle School. They are not modern buildings, and that has repercussions for our community. It means a major and sometimes unpredictable tax burden on our households because maintaining and updating an aging school infrastructure isn't cheap.

During the pandemic, it has huge implications on a public health level, as our building's electrical systems and almost nonexistent HVAC systems just don't support the kinds of air quality remediation that were required. That cost lengthy delays and greater expenses in getting our children back into school safely.

There are other towns nearby -- towns that, like West Orange, were built and settled early in our area's history -- that face the same ongoing school infrastructure problems. Notably, our fellow Essex County towns of Montclair -- part of which is already in the 11th District; South Orange, and Maplewood, which are both in CD10.

Speaking from personal experience, West Orange school taxes are the vast majority of my property tax burden, which has gone up 50 percent over the past 15 years -- unlike our salaries. Families like mine are struggling with this, and as our school buildings age, I don't anticipate these tax increases are going to slow. Our public schools are going to need major overhauls; we're going to need new buildings. And in towns like West Orange, Montclair, South Orange, and Maplewood, the school infrastructure challenges we face will increasingly affect our tax burden and our complicated relationship with Federal policies, like SALT deductions and our need for Federal funding.

On that basis, I believe it would benefit the taxpayers and parents of these towns to share a congressional representative. South Orange and Maplewood would be reasonable and beneficial additions to Congressional District 11.

Again, my thanks for your time, your patience, and consideration; and for the hard work I know you're putting in.

Good night.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good night, and thank you for your comments.

MS. BOCKOL: You're welcome.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Stacey Abenstein.

S T A C E Y A B E N S T E I N: Hi, my name is Stacey Abenstein, and I am a 30-year resident of Livingston; and the Field Director for NJ 11th for Change, an unaffiliated grassroots group dedicated to advocating for all people of New Jersey's 11th Congressional District through outreach and education. I would like to bring to your attention a community of interest not previously mentioned in the testimony.

It is imperative that our historically Jewish communities be considered. Essex County, in particular, has a large Jewish population, stemming from the days they resided in Newark, Irvington, and the Oranges. In fact, I belong to Temple B'nai Abraham, a congregation that started in Newark in 1853 and thrived there until not long ago. The Jewish population began to migrate to the suburbs in the 1960's, and the congregation followed suit, relocating to Livingston in 1973.

A large number of the relocated Jews now live in Livingston and West Orange in CD11, Millburn-Short Hills in CD7, and South Orange and Maplewood in CD10. Their children are now raising their families in the area. Currently, these towns are broken up into three congressional districts, watering down the voice of a populous that is plagued by skyrocketing antisemitism. According to the ADL, antisemitic hate crimes are at the highest levels since they have been tracking it. The AJC says nearly one in four Jews experienced antisemitism just this year.

Sunday night, the last night of Chanukkah, a sixth grader in New Jersey found a sign posted on the door of her synagogue with a swastika and the words, in capital letters, "WE ARE EVERYWHERE." It is imperative you join the geographically adjacent communities of Maplewood, South Orange, and Millburn-Short Hills with the other highly concentrated Jewish

towns already in the 11th Congressional District, including Livingston, West Orange, and Montclair, to ensure the Essex County Jewish community, 59,500 strong, have an influential voice in Washington.

With my written testimony, I will submit a map of the concentration of the Jewish households taken from a recent study completed by the Jewish Federation of MetroWest, in conjunction with Brandeis University. Each red dot represents 25 Jewish households, not individuals. Remarkably, 72 percent of these Jewish households have lived in the area for 20 years or more. An additional 11 percent moved to the area within the last 5 years -- confirming Essex County continues to be a destination for Jewish families in the Northern New Jersey/New York Metropolitan area.

I would also like to advocate for the AAPI community, a flourishing group with a booming population in Livingston and surrounding towns. Many years ago, I met the son of the original owners of my house. He told me that his parents were the first in the neighborhood to buy a plot of land but were the last to build, as they were afraid others would not build in the neighborhood if they knew an Asian family would be living there. This was 1960, demonstrating a more than 60-year history of settlement and community building in this particular section of New Jersey.

The Asian population in Parsippany and Montville, in eastern Morris County; and Livingston and Millburn-Short Hills, in western Essex County, with a few surrounding and connecting towns, represents 47 percent of the total Asian population in all of Essex and Morris counties combined. I believe this cultural and geographical block of almost 57,000 Asian Americans must be represented in one congressional district. All but Millburn are currently in CD11. I will attach a map to back up my numbers.

The group has also been on the receiving end of horrendous bias and hate. Like the Jews, we must make sure they have a strong presence in one district so their voice and their power are not lost.

I would like to point out that neither of these communities of interest are known -- they're not known to vote in either direction. This is not a political statement; this is a true picture of common groups that live and vote in this area.

Lastly, I ask that you share the draft of the map you will be submitting for consideration. It is important that the public be able to give testimony on these maps, not just in abstract.

Thank you so much for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Ken Dolsky.

Mr. Dolsky.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, he is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay.

Amanda Devecka-Rinear.

A M A N D A D E V E C K A - R I N E A R: Hello everyone; thank you Judge Wallace, Chairs Fuller and Steinhardt, and members of the New Jersey Congressional Redistricting Commission for allowing me to speak here today. I am with my toddler coworker, who you may see. And I live in Southern Ocean County, and this is a picture of my street -- just after the nor'easter this October -- you are watching.

I am the Executive Director of the New Jersey Organizing Project, or NJOP. We are a nonprofit grassroots organization and we were founded by Superstorm Sandy survivors. Much of our work is focused on

helping people recover from natural disasters that continue to impact New Jersey. And while I'm not here on behalf of NJOP officially, I am here to offer my testimony on the importance of keeping communities of interest together.

Keeping communities of interest together: Specifically, I want to speak to the special relationship between many of the towns in the 6th Congressional District. Even though I don't live in the 6th Congressional District personally, many of our members do. But we have looked to Congressman Pallone for his leadership on stormwater and flooding related issues -- and New Jersey is incredibly lucky to have someone with his level of experience and expertise on that particular problem.

Which actually, frankly, I think Ida shows all of us that flooding and storms can impact any New Jerseyan anywhere. But it's not hard to look at the geographical map of the 6th District and think like, "Oh, that's a weird looking district," right? But if you look closely, you'll see that there's a special connection that the majority of these towns have in common -- 26 of the 32 towns border a major body of water. And again, it's not-- At this point, I think we should all know it's not just the ocean or the bays; it's rivers, or it's even just severe rain that cause problems with flooding at this point in New Jersey. The Atlantic Ocean, the Raritan, and Sandy Hook Bays, not to mention numerous estuaries winding in and out of the district -- it's clear that this is a water district. These large bodies of water flow to the same point in the Atlantic Ocean.

I have worked -- I'm a fourth-generation resident of a small island, and I have worked for almost 10 years on issues surrounding living with water, storms, and flooding. And particularly as a result of climate

change, rising seas, and stronger storms, I know firsthand the challenges our community has faced. It's incredibly important for these communities, currently in the same district, to continue to benefit from a representative who understands and has the experience to mitigate these problems. More than nine years later, Sandy survivors in Congressional District 6 and other places are still recovering and working with the Federal government to make themselves whole again. And in the wake of Ida, many of those same communities unfortunately began the long recovery process.

We've worked hand in hand with Congressman Pallone, the current representative of the 6th, to mitigate future issues from shore resilience and beach replenishment, to flood mitigation projects, to Federal flood insurance policies. These are pieces of work that take decades to complete, and an incredible -- they take years to sort of figure out and understand, even. This is why continuity of representation and your consideration of the importance of communities of interest are so vital when drawing your maps.

Alongside a long-term representative, water communities have made real progress in addressing common challenges. Like, for example, this year, with Congressman Pallone's lead, we were able to forgive FEMA claw backs for many towns that were impacted by Sandy, both in the 6th District and even down in the 4th and the 3rd.

So I ask you, on behalf of storm survivors of the 6th Congressional District, not to break up these communities. Whether it's Monmouth or Middlesex County, the challenges that bring this District together deserve a voice.

Thank you for your time. And *there's* living with water.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Diane Hawkins.

D I A N E H A W K I N S: Good evening. Again, my name is Diane Hawkins, I am a native New Jerseyan, and I've resided in Central Jersey for over five decades. I am a current resident of North Brunswick Township, where I've lived for the last 21 years; prior to that, residing in Franklin Park and South Brunswick for a number of years.

I would like to begin by thanking the Commission for hosting this public hearing, and for agreeing to host 10 such public hearings this year. I greatly appreciate the privilege to testify before you this evening. I hope that you've listened to the many people in this state, and that you will schedule one final meeting after this one, after you've produced the draft map or maps, so that we, the people of New Jersey, have the opportunity to comment on that map before it is certified.

I've lived, worked, and worshipped in Central Jersey for over 50 years. I've watched single family homes, townhomes, and condominiums develop that have replaced so much of the farmland that was once here. With that, the demographics have shifted, and the landscape has been transferred into a very diverse community, from predominantly Caucasian to almost 50-50 split between Caucasian and people of color, comprised of African Americans, Latinx, and Asian.

I am here to urge the Commission to draw a racially equitable congressional map that is reflective of the demographics, and to lend my support to the racial equity map recently released by the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and other New Jersey advocacy groups. As we all know, New Jersey's communities of color are growing, and the Commission should

ensure these communities are receiving equitable representation that reflects and respects this growth in the next Congressional map. New districts should be drawn that reflect the fact that New Jersey's population growth has been overwhelming concentrated among New Jersey's communities of color.

In 2010, New Jersey was 40 percent people of color. But our State's Congressional districts were biasedly drawn to center white communities -- significantly diminishing the voices of people of color. My hope is that this Commission's actions will be nonpartisan. Now that we are effectively a state that is half people of color and half Caucasian, New Jersey's districts should be drawn so that half of them, 6 out of 12, be majority people of color.

The Commission should maintain New Jersey's majority-Black districts, such as Congressional District 10, and majority-Hispanic District 8 to comply with the Voting Rights Act. Given the large and growing Hispanic-Latino population in New Jersey, 22 percent of the state -- up 29 percent from the last 10 years -- the Commission could draw a district that is plurality Hispanic-Latino, in addition to the Hispanic-Latino majority district, to ensure that residents have adequate representation in the next decade.

Also, given the growing Asian population in New Jersey, 10 percent of the state -- up 30 percent in the last 10 years -- the Commission should draw two Asian influence districts where Asian residents make up a significant portion of the population. The Commission should also respect the public testimony of people who have spoken before you, and try to keep communities of interest together.

I hope the Commission will seriously consider adopting all or much of the racial equity map. This map succeeds at centering racial equity

and fairly representing residents of New Jersey. The map successfully draws 6 out of 12 districts to be majority people of color, contains a Black majority district and a Hispanic majority district; contains a Hispanic plurality district, and contains two Asian influence districts. It meets fair redistricting principles, such as equal population, contiguity, and partisan fairness. The map is supported by the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, NAACP State Conference, Salvation and Social Justice, Fair Share Housing Center, and other advocacy groups.

I close by thanking you for listening to me this evening, and I ask that you please prioritize racial equity in the next round of congressional maps; and consider adopting some or all of the racial equity map submitted by advocacy groups, which does this so successfully, with integrity.

Again, thank you and have a wonderful evening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

William Squires.

Is Mr. Squires available?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, he is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Richard Cammarieri.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Cammarieri is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: George Britt.

Mr. Britt.

REVEREND GEORGE E. BRITT: Good evening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good evening.

REV. BRITT: I am Reverend George Britt. I have a permanent residence in the 10th Congressional District, where I was born and raised, and where I own a home and vote.

As the pastor of Mount Teman African Methodist Episcopal Church of Elizabeth, New Jersey, I have pastored in the 8th Congressional District, where the church has a parsonage and plays a pivotal role in all aspects of the community's life. In addition to my roots and roles in the referenced district, I have pastored at Asbury Park, located in the 6th Congressional District -- a district where I was an active part of the community as a servant leader.

I want to thank the Commission tonight for this opportunity. As a community leader and champion of collaborations and inclusivity, tonight's hearing is a great opportunity and a great sign, as I'm appreciative of the Commission, and I'm appreciative that the Commission has chosen to wait to schedule additional hearings and a final public hearing. I hope this is an indication that the Commission has listened to the many people in this state, and you are planning to schedule your final meeting after the Commission has produced the draft map, so the people of New Jersey will have an opportunity to comment on the map before certification.

I am here to urge the New Jersey Redistricting Commission to draw a racially equitable congressional map, and to lend my support to the racial equity map recently released by the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and other New Jersey advocacy groups. Like Diane Hawkins, it is apparent to me that New Jersey's communities of color are growing, and the Commission must ensure these communities are receiving equitable representation that reflects and respects this growth.

As a clergy person who has been blessed with the privilege to interact with and support families of color throughout the State of New Jersey, with both their public and private affairs, I am fully aware of the

importance of establishing and sustaining districts that reflect the state and ensure representation for people of color. This is essential, especially when we acknowledge the fact that New Jersey's population growth has been overwhelmingly concentrated among communities of color, especially Black and brown communities.

You heard Ms. Hawkins share the information regarding the stats, and yes, we have seen an 8 percent increase in population of people of color. The Commission must ensure that the voice of people of color, especially Black people, is not diminished nor silenced.

Therefore, I am calling on the Commission to ensure, yes, that half, or 6 of the 12, Congressional districts are majority people of color. I am also calling on the Commission to maintain New Jersey's 10th District -- where my roots are -- as a majority Black district; as well as maintain the 8th Congressional District, where I worship and work with the Black and Hispanic community, as a majority Hispanic district. This is essential, as stated, in order to ensure New Jersey complies with the Voting Rights Act.

As a champion of justice, I understand that a threat to justice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere; and I have seen this materialize as I have traveled the state as a part of the connectional African Methodist Episcopal Church, which has 90-plus churches throughout the State of New Jersey. And also, I have seen this up close as a Board Member on the Mercer County-based Social Service Agency.

So I am also calling on this Commission to ensure that the 12th Congressional District is maintained as a majority people of color district. This is essential. As you know, this District population, the people of color population, has increased. And it's important that we ensure that this

community continues to have influence in their district -- Black and brown people will continue to have influence in that District.

In closing, I do support, and I am asking you, this Commission, to adopt the racial equity congressional redistricting map. This map succeeds, as Diane Hawkins stated, in ensuring that you do what is necessary to draw a map that includes 6 out of 12 districts to be majority people of color, contains a Black majority district, yes, and a Hispanic majority district; and contains a Hispanic plurality district and contains two Asian influence districts. This map is supported by organizations I work closely with, including the NAACP State Conference, Salvation and Social Justice, and the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice.

Thank you for listening, and I ask that you prioritize racial equity in the next round of congressional maps, and consider adopting the racial equity map submitted by advocacy groups, which successfully does the work entrusted to this Commission.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Maita Lockhart.

Ms. Lockhart.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Maita Lockhart is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Wartyna Davis.

WARTYNA DAVIS, Ph. D.: Good evening, Chairman Wallace, Chairs Steinhardt and Fuller, along with the remaining Commissioners. My name is Dr. Wartyna Davis, and it is my pleasure to present before this august Commission.

Before I begin, I'd like to commend the Commission on the transparent and meaningful Public Hearing process; and like others have said, thank you -- we look forward to more opportunities to engage in the future.

A bit about me. I have a Ph.D. in Political Science, and I have the privilege of serving as the Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at William Patterson University, where I also have the honor of holding the rank of Tenured Full Professor of Political Science. I also have the honor of serving as a Township of Bloomfield Councilwoman-at-Large for the last eight years.

I am here to speak briefly about a community of interest, my town, and race and economic representation as well. Bloomfield is a town rich in tradition and promise for the future. We have the pleasure of sharing borders with several other wonderful towns -- in alphabetical order so I'm not showing preference: Belleville, Clifton, East Orange, Glen Ridge, Montclair, and Newark. The demographics of Bloomfield are changing and have changed dramatically over the last few decades, particularly in the last decade. Our town is growing in racial and economic diversity. We're considered somewhat of a bedroom community, where residents live here but travel to New York City, North and South Jersey.

We're connected to surrounding communities through shared infrastructure, like our roads. In fact, those living in our border towns often have to travel through Bloomfield to get to other major arteries, such as the Garden State Parkway, or Bloomfield Avenue that goes through those seven towns. We are currently represented by two congresspersons. We admire and respect both of them.

However, splitting our town minimizes the diverse voices and perspectives within our town. I don't need to share with you the guiding principles of your work -- I've actually heard them referenced many times during many of the public hearings. But this idea of sensitivity to equitable representation and sensitivity to communities of interest is particularly important, and why I'm speaking on this.

It's important that your work seeks to reach racial equity through descriptive and substantive representation. There are many good reasons to consider the likelihood of selecting minority candidates in a district, as has been inferred by the previous speakers. Lots of good reasons. We know that the literature suggests that representational attitudes of minority legislatures tend to not just focus on a geographical space, but as well on broader constituencies of which they may share a minoritized interest, broadly.

However, we also know that this can be overdone. And the consequence is a resulting of lower district representativeness of districts that are not of those minoritized groups. More specifically -- or more clearly -- in those districts in which there are not the same level of representation, you actually find a diminished or a less -- they are less responsive to minoritized communities. So it's very important that we are aware of that.

As a consequence, I am advocating for a partisan symmetry test to be used; and yes, as you have heard before. It's a practical way to prevent sort of partisan gerrymandering, and also ensures that the voters -- that the map is reflective of voters and responsive to changes in their viewpoints, as we have experienced in the last decade.

It is my hope that truly diverse communities like Bloomfield be kept together, and that these thoughts that I'm sharing with you are included in your deliberations.

Thank you very much for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Christina Renna.

Ms. Renna.

C H R I S T I N A R E N N A: Good evening, Chairman Wallace and members of the Congressional Redistricting Commission. My name is Christina Renna, and I am President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments before you this evening.

I'd like to begin by commending the Commission, as so many have, for going way over and above what has been seen in so many other states as it relates to public input into this process; which is simply critical to drawing a fair map, as we all know.

For those of you unfamiliar with the Chamber, we are a nearly 149-year-old apolitical organization that represents approximately 1,100 businesses, nonprofits, and other community organizations in the seven most southern counties of New Jersey -- specifically Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Salem, Cumberland, Atlantic, and Cape May counties. One of our many roles as an organization is to advocate as a nonpartisan voice as to what is best for our member companies and the region as a whole, which is what brings me here this evening.

Of course, during the previous public hearings, much time has -- appropriately so -- been dedicated to communities of interest and ensuring

that communities with important commonalities are kept together as a result of this process. Tonight, my remarks will similarly discuss communities of interest, but under the umbrella of the uniqueness of the southern portion of the State of New Jersey.

Most of us know, but it does bear repeating, that South Jersey is extraordinarily different from our northern brethren in nearly every way. A good portion of South Jersey is essentially in the greater Philadelphia area. We are very different from being in the suburbs of New York; we root for the Philadelphia Eagles, most of us; we visit Wawa multiple times a day, most of us; and we watch our local news that is broadcast out of Center City, Philadelphia.

So that's all to say that being a suburb of Philadelphia is incredibly important to South Jersey's identity and helps define much of our community. I would say perhaps most importantly, Philadelphia and our South Jersey suburbs share a vital economic link. Not just in commuters, but in the overall shared industry and economic interest. The shared geography, for example, of the Delaware River is particularly important from an economic perspective of our port system here in South Jersey, in Camden and in Paulsboro. As we all know, the Philadelphia 76ers, they may play in Philadelphia, but their practice facility is in New Jersey and that facility employs many residents from Gloucester and Camden counties.

I mean, I can go on, the examples are truly endless. But being a part of this greater Philadelphia region is an undeniable characteristic of what makes South Jersey *South Jersey*, and adds to our dynamic and unique community.

But similar to how the South Jersey Chamber advocates for the seven most southern counties on issues that disproportionately impact their region, we are equally sensitive to the differing qualities and varying interests that make South Jersey so unique. Case in point: Last year, during the peak of the pandemic, our organization released a policy report advocating for a regional reopening plan to the economy, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach to reopening the economy. Our plan advocated for splitting the State up into different regions; and specifically in South Jersey, dividing South Jersey into different segments: what we called in the report the *South Jersey Region*, and the secondary that we called the *Shore Region*.

We explained in our report that although the seven most southern counties are one region and very much one family, in this instance government should consider the priorities and unique issues facing the shorelines differently than other counties in the region. I use this as an example, because many of the same principles apply to drawing a new, fair congressional map.

So in conclusion, I respectfully urge the Commission to draw a map that keeps communities of interest together, appreciating what makes the seven most southern counties a true community -- while also considering the distinct characteristics seen geographically and demographically throughout the region, making it such an incredible place to live, work, and visit.

With that, that concludes my remarks, and thank you very much for the ability to weigh in on behalf of the region.

And thank you again to the Commission for the opportunity as well.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Rick Robinson.

Mr. Robinson.

RICK ROBINSON: Good evening everybody; my name is Mr. Rick Robinson, and I am a concerned North New Jersey native involving the proposed plans of voter redistricting.

So, first of all, I want to say good day to the New Jersey Redistricting Commission and the New Jersey Apportionment Commission. And let me start by saying I serve as the Chairman of the New Jersey State Conference of the NAACP, as well as one of two Chairs of the Newark, New Jersey NAACP for our Criminal Justice Committees. The Newark, New Jersey NAACP Branch is a community anchor that looks to address serious matters where individual civil rights have been violated or compromised.

Today, on behalf of the State and for the Newark, New Jersey Branch, I am requesting that the plans for voter redistricting be reflective of the racial equity map that so many people are speaking about today. This important initiative was spearheaded by the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, and heavily supported by other New Jersey advocacy programs.

For decades, our community in Newark has suffered and continues to suffer from other meaningful shortcomings involving effective, progressive policing, education, housing, employment, alternate juvenile justice matters, and mental health challenges due to growth. Although we are now moving in the right direction to address these matters, thanks to the leadership of Newark New Jersey's mayor, Ras J. Baraka, the notion of redistricting must be still reflective of Newark's growth, especially involving people of color.

Since 2010, New Jersey has had a significant rise in numbers regarding people of color. These growing markets need to have effective, equitable representation. And one of the Commission's obligations should be to preserve New Jersey's majority Black district -- which is CD10 -- and majority Hispanic district -- which is CD8 -- concerning compliance with the Voting Rights Act. Moreover, the Commission also needs to consider the rising number in Hispanic and Latino, and Asian communities as well, continuing to having their voices heard.

In my opinion, I believe the Commission needs to embrace all the recommendations of the recently released racial equity map. As I mentioned earlier, other advocacy organizations have supported this initiative, such as the New Jersey State Conference NAACP, the New Jersey Black Issues Convention, the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice, the Association of Black Women Lawyers in New Jersey, and the Salvation and Social Justice Organization.

Lastly, I want to take this time to thank the New Jersey Redistricting Commission, the New Jersey Apportionment Commission, and the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice for inviting the State NAACP and the Newark, New Jersey NAACP to testify on this important issue. Please understand: This initiative depicts fairness, and understands and embraces growth, which is why the Commission needs to embrace the racial equity map and all its recommendations.

Thank you so much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

MR. ROBINSON: You're welcome.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Meg Thomann.

Ms. Thomann.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, she was here earlier but I don't see her in the Zoom room any longer.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay. Is Tenija Bussey -- Ms. Bussey?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: She is also not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: I don't know if that person was included in the first presentation or not.

Amman Seehra.

A M M A N S E E H R A, Esq.: I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Amman Seehra, and I am the Vice Chair of the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, or SALDEF. More importantly, I am here as a Robbinsville resident for the past 11 years, who was born and raised in Hamilton, New Jersey, and has a deep understanding and connection to our AAPI and other minority communities throughout New Jersey.

The 2020 Census established AAPI voters as the fastest-growing ethnic group in New Jersey. Our ranks increased by 44 percent from the 2010 Census, to a statewide population of over 1 million. Indian Americans are the largest ethnic subgroup, and our population is mostly concentrated in two population centers. One is in Northern New Jersey, spanning roughly the greater Newark to Jersey City area in Essex, Bergen, and Hudson counties. The other is in Central New Jersey, with densely AAPI populated cities like Edison and Woodbridge, anchoring a region that comprises Middlesex, Mercer, and Somerset counties.

Even with 11 percent of the state identifying as AAPI, and recent victories by AAPI politicians in statewide elections, proportional

representation for us is a long way off. The biggest reason for this is that the AAPI vote and population centers have been cracked and mixed in with communities that lack shared experience. An easy example of this cracking is Robbinsville in Mercer County.

The 2020 Census showed that Robbinsville Township is 21.5 percent AAPI. It has significant overlap in services and population movement with Plainsboro and West Windsor, which are 59 percent and 47.1 percent AAPI, respectively. Yet instead of voting alongside most of Middlesex and Mercer counties in NJ12 and NJ6, Robbinsville votes in NJ4 with a geography and community that many AAPIs do not interact with.

This is the problem with the AAPI community all over the state. Diluting the AAPI vote in districts that are not reflective of our reality has become all too common, but the AAPI population continues to lead all ethnic groups in the rate of growth, and the new maps must reflect reality.

I would like to refer the Commissioners to the racial equity map endorsed by a number of nonpartisan organizations and shared with the Commission earlier this week. Amongst its six majority minority and minority-influenced districts, the two that incorporate AAPI population centers I highlighted -- NJ6 and NJ11 -- have more than 20 percent AAPI populations, reflective of our actual numbers and the boundaries of our community.

This is a tangible step forward that will lead to better representation and provide a voice for AAPI communities at all levels. This is why SALDEF has endorsed the racial equity map, and I strongly encourage the Commissioner to consider it as a map that corrects longstanding inequities in how Asian New Jerseyans are heard and represented.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments, sir.

Christian Estevez.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: He is not present, Mr. Chairman.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Giovana Castaneda.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: She is also not present, Mr. Chairman.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Charlene Walker.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: She is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Ann Dooley.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Also not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Susan Coleman.

S U S A N C O L E M A N: Yes, I'm here. Finally.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Not finally; there are others to come, believe me. (laughter)

MS. COLEMAN: I know; but you finally got someone alive.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Yes, thank you. Go right ahead.

MS. COLEMAN: I am Susan Lavine Coleman. I moved to New Jersey nearly 40 years ago for my career in the pharmaceutical industry, and I have lived in Morristown, in CD3, for 24 years.

We moved here for the schools, the small town atmosphere, the abundant green space, plus access to all Philadelphia has to offer. But most critical to the decision was convenient commuting for my daily commute up 295 to Princeton, and my husband's to Philadelphia.

I retired at the end of last year after serving as President of a national healthcare consulting firm for many years. I am deeply involved in

a number of community groups, working to shape an economically vibrant, safe, welcoming, and healthy future for our towns and residents. And that is what brings me here today to testify. The decisions of this Redistricting Committee will have a disproportionate impact on what our future looks like.

One of the strengths of Burlington County and the South-Central New Jersey region, generally, is our shared experiences, common interests, and concerns. We value a shared way of life. We are middle class and working class. Many of us commuters, who came to this area for quality public schools, a little more space between our homes, the proximity to farmstands and open space, and a less hectic way of life.

Our lives are oriented around the infrastructural backbone of the state: the New Jersey Turnpike, I-295, the Northeast Corridor trains. Our families and businesses are connected by the highways and jughandles that are critical to commerce and to our communities. Even as we live so close to farms, we take advantage of the sports and cultural offerings of Philadelphia, Trenton, Willmington, and New York. We relish the diversity of cuisines available and are eager to try new restaurants, but we haven't abandoned our traditions. We still eat Tacconelli's Pizza, and everyone knows a better place for cheesesteaks than the famous tourist traps. We go down the shore on weekends, or maybe for a week-long vacation, but it's not the place we call home.

Now, in redistricting, the goal should be to ensure the best representation of our communities and people. Where we have contiguous communities with shared experiences and common interests and concerns, they should be unified into a district to ensure that those interests can be heard and represented by our legislators. What we should not do is dilute

the voice of our residents by having districts that contain very different types of communities, interests, and needs.

My district, CD3, is right now comprised of two very different, unrelated communities. Burlington County, the western half of our district, is classic Philadelphia suburban, with many people commuting north, south, or to the Philadelphia metro area for jobs.

Ocean County, the eastern half of our district, is a New York-focused shore community. They get their news from New York TV stations and read New York newspapers. Their lives revolve around the Garden State Parkway, and especially Route 9, but not the Turnpike or 295. They worry about coastal flooding and when they'll be hit by the next superstorm, and whether they'll lose power. They are populated by retirement communities of people who have moved from North Jersey or New York to find a cheaper cost of living. Their restaurant choices are primarily Italian or diners, or the occasional seafood restaurants, and that's the way they like it.

Not only are the two parts of our District very distinct communities with few shared interests, CD3 is physically cut in two by the Pinelands and the Joint Base, which makes the differences in interests and concerns even more pronounced.

I urge the Commission to consider the wishes of voters so that our impact can be maximized. The goal should be to combine contiguous communities with shared experiences and common interests so they can be better represented. I ask that you do not dilute the voice and impact of voters by continuing to have a bifurcated district like ours, where there are distinctly different experiences and needs between our two halves and the communities within.

Partisanship should have no place in this decision. Please recognize the needs of the Delaware Valley region and the South Jersey commuting corridor, and give voters a more unified opportunity to be heard and shape their own future.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Matt Duffy.

Mr. Duffy.

MATTHEW DUFFY, Esq.: Hello; my name is Matthew Duffy, I am originally from Morristown, I am currently living and raising my family in Summit. I am also the Special Counsel for Redistricting at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, and I am speaking in that role today.

Specifically, I am here to support the racial equity map submitted by a coalition of social and racial justice organizations, of which the Institute is a part of. We've repeatedly said that our map meets legal and constitutional standards, and I want to touch on just some of those standards today. In addition to the testimony, I plan to submit to the Commission a written analysis that goes into further depth, shortly.

I am going to start and mostly focus on the Voting Rights Act, or VRA, as I'm sure you know any map must comply with the standards of Section 2 of the VRA, which prohibits any standard practice or procedure that results in a denial or abridgement of the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.

When it comes to redistricting, this means that states cannot draw new maps that discriminate against people of color by limiting their opportunity to elect a representative of their choice. In New Jersey, the VRA

first requires drawing one majority Black district -- District 10 -- and one majority Hispanic district -- District 8. In the racial equity map, we tried to keep those districts as similar to the current map, after hearing from community members that it would be difficult for them to move into a non-VRA district. For example, after speaking with community members in Montclair, some of whom have testified before this Commission, we kept Black residents in the southern part of Montclair in the majority Black District 10 rather than moving them into another district.

The Institute strongly disagrees with any suggestion that the Commission should break up Districts 8 and 10, and urges the Commission to ignore those suggestions. Not only would it be detrimental to racial equity, but reducing the Hispanic or Black voting age population to anything less than a majority in Districts 8 or 10 would open the State up to litigation. At the same time, we urge the Commission not to pack Black or Hispanic voters into these respective districts either, as that would lead to an improper, if not illegal, dilution of their vote.

Our racial equity map would not pack voters. We made sure that Hispanic and Black Voting Age population in each respective district is just above 50 percent, to ensure that those groups have an opportunity to have a voice in other districts as well. Given demographic trends, however, which many have spoken of tonight, the Commission must go further than these two districts.

The Census reports our State is changing, as many have noted. Over 48 percent of New Jersey residents are people of color, up from 40 percent in 2010. Possibly more importantly, 100 percent of new growth in New Jersey came from people of color. The non-Hispanic white population

in New Jersey actually declined over the last 10 years. Our State will very soon be majority people of color, if we aren't already.

Not recognizing these demographic trends could also open the State up to litigation. As I'm also sure you are aware, the Justice Department sued the state of Texas over their new district maps. At the core of their complaint was the fact that even though 95 percent of (indiscernible) Texas came from people of color, the state, "Refused to recognize the growing minority electorate," direct quote, by not drawing any majority minority districts.

Our racial equity map accurately recognizes the growing minority electorate, and we hope you will do the same. Because half of New Jersey's residents are people of color, half of the districts in our map are majority people of color. Our map further recognizes our State's growing Hispanic and Asian communities by drawing an additional Hispanic plurality district and two additional Asian influence districts.

We urge the Commission to follow our lead, rather than Texas' bad example, by recognizing New Jersey's growing communities when drawing new districts. Our racial equity map does this while satisfying traditional redistricting principles. The map has an acceptable population deviation between the districts, under 2012 Supreme Court precedent, while furthering a valid State interest in terms of maintaining and centering communities of interest. We also made sure our map is fair under all well known partisan fairness metrics -- including the one being incorporated into the pending Freedom to Vote Act.

Finally, I want to thank the Commission, as again many have done, for agreeing to host 10 hearings. And I'm also encouraged by the fact

that the Commission has not yet scheduled the 10th and final hearing; I'm going to repeat what multiple members of the public, community groups, advocacy organizations, national experts, the Mayor of Newark have said, and hope the Commission will schedule their final public hearing after the Commission has drawn a draft map -- or maps -- but before that map is certified.

You can also schedule that as soon as possible for those of us who attend all the hearings and want to help our schedule out. Just please do it after you, as a group, intend to be done with your draft map. You can also even schedule multiple hearings, as there is no reason 10 hearings must be a ceiling rather than a floor.

Finally, thank you so much to the Commission for listening to me today, and thank you for all your hard work in this really difficult process.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Olga Lewnes.

O L G A L E W N E S: Yes, hello.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good evening.

MS. LEWNES: Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight.

My name is Olga Lewnes; my family has lived in Wayne, New Jersey, since 1958 -- some 63 years. I live in New Jersey District 11. I would like to make two points related to the congressional redistricting.

One, I see from the Commission's website that you are required to hold three public hearings on redistricting by January 18, 2022, based on the New Jersey 2020 Census, and then to vote on the redistricting plans. I don't see any other requirements to inform the public of your deliberations.

I ask that the Commission release a draft of the redistribution and map for public review and comment before you vote on the results. Such transparency is critical to ensure that the public understands and agrees to any changes in its congressional representation.

Second, the community that I live in is a commuter community that is impacted by transportation infrastructure in Northern New Jersey. Over the years, I and members of my family have commuted from Wayne to other parts of New Jersey, including Plainfield, Newark, Hackensack, Paramus, East Hanover, New Providence, and Bridgewater; and to Manhattan, and even to Brooklyn. There is no public transportation available for such commutes between Wayne and these New Jersey destinations. You have to drive.

I have personally experienced many years of frustration, delay, and expense of a northern New Jersey to Manhattan commute, when a 22 mile trip can take anywhere from 90 minutes to 3 hours by car, or over an hour by commuter bus, depending on traffic, weather, and time of day. It floods in Wayne, affecting quality of life, health, and property values.

I am interested in Federal support of infrastructure and transportation improvement along the roads, rails, and corridors throughout New Jersey. I also support those Federal initiatives dealing with climate change, the environment, and energy, which affect New Jersey residents and voters. These interests are aligned with the other communities which currently make up District 11. And I would like to see Wayne stay there.

Thank you very much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Joan Kristensen.

J O A N K R I S T E N S E N: Yes, hi.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good evening.

MS. KRISTENSEN: I would like to thank the Commission for holding so many public hearings, including this extra one tonight, and giving us a chance to speak.

My name is Joan Kristensen; I am from Tewksbury Township in Hunterdon County, which is part of CD7. I, like quite a few who have testified across these meetings, have also been part of the grassroots efforts that coalesced around the 2018 election.

Three years ago my family left Morris County to move out to Hunterdon, and we found the political landscape, just 20 minutes west of where we came from, to be very different. A few of my neighbors from nearby Clinton Township testified in an earlier public meeting. What they didn't mention to you is that this past November, five incumbent Republicans in Clinton Township and in my town of Tewksbury ran unopposed for town government. There were no Democrats, and even more disturbing to me, no independent challengers.

I thought about all the civic engagement I've been part of across these past five years, and the hundreds of people that I've connected to through that effort, and all that we learned. That is what democracy should look like; not what happened in Tewksbury in November, and in Clinton Township, where no one from two registered voting groups, including the state's largest, even bothered to step up.

Please don't turn District 7 back into a place like Tewksbury, where few citizens participate in the electoral process because they assume their vote doesn't matter. During the last redistricting process, CD7 was

drawn to be a safe seat for the then-Republican member of Congress. Due to that, few folks participated or even paid attention to who we were sending to Washington. This all changed drastically in 2018 when grassroots activists helped to flip this seat.

Now, we've heard talk of once again making this District into a district that is safe for Republicans. While we understand that a shifting population necessitates redistricting, we ask that you adopt an anti-gerrymandering standard, and redistrict with fairness that reflects the will of the voters. This is the right thing to do for many reasons, including promoting continued civic engagement, which is good for democracy.

The eyes of the entire country will continue to focus on what develops in CD7.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Kevin Kane.

Mr. Kane.

KEVIN A. KANE: Good evening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good evening.

MAYOR KANE: Thank you Chairman Wallace, Chairs Steinhardt and Fuller, and Commissioners for this virtual opportunity to testify this evening.

My name is Kevin Kane, and I am the Mayor of Freehold Borough in Monmouth County. Prior to starting my term as Mayor in 2020, I was an 18-year Councilman in Freehold Borough. I am a lifelong, fifth generation resident of Freehold, with strong family ties of community service to Freehold and our surrounding communities.

I am testifying this evening to encourage the New Jersey Redistricting Commission to place Freehold Borough in a district where it will match its communities of interest, unlike right now. The 4th Congressional District is clearly dominated by Ocean County and communities that are concerned with coastal issues and resiliency. While these are important, Freehold Borough has more in common with the inland communities of western Monmouth County and Burlington County.

Freehold Borough is the County seat and economic hub of western Monmouth County. We have historic ties to the central part of the state, and our location in the heart of New Jersey makes public transportation, shopping, medical access, schools, and education top issues for us. Freehold Borough also has a significant and increasing Hispanic population with its own distinct needs, which are unique to our community within the District. The Jersey Shore communities to the east have an economic model based on seasonal travel and tourism. This is an important part of our State's economy, but Freehold Borough has a different economic model that is based less on seasonal activity and more on year-round business. Our needs are different.

Our community would certainly benefit by being in a congressional district with like and similar communities that share our needs and understand our issues. I would welcome the opportunity to develop a relationship with a new congressman. I honestly can't recall the last time our Congressman was in Freehold Borough.

Again, thank you very much for this opportunity to speak tonight. Be well and stay safe.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you, Mayor, for your comments.

Ritu Pancholy.

RITU PANCHOLY: Hi.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good evening.

MS. PANCHOLY: Good evening; my name is Ritu Pancholy.

Thank you, Chairman Wallace and members of the Commission, as well as the staff, for facilitating these hearings. And thank you for making the time for my comments this evening.

As I mentioned, my name is Ritu Pancholy. I have been a resident of South Orange, New Jersey, for the past 11 years. I am a lifelong New Jersey resident and a first generation American. My parents immigrated from India in the 1970s, and I grew up in Burlington Township, New Jersey.

I went to Rutgers University for college, where I studied political science and redistricting at the Eagleton School of Politics, and I eventually left the state for law school to attend Duke. After I married, my husband and I moved to South Orange for its access to the city via the trains and its dynamic and diverse population. I now have two young children in the local public schools. I also run my own HR consulting business, based out of New Jersey. Similarly, my husband is also a healthcare entrepreneur and works out of our home in New Jersey.

I am very involved in our local community and am the current President of SOMA Action, a 501C4 grassroots organization that seeks to mobilize local residents on a variety of issues. One of the issues I care about deeply, as an attorney, an Asian American, and resident in New Jersey, is voting rights. As you know, across the country voting rights are under attack and legislative maps are currently being further gerrymandered. I hope that

New Jersey will show the rest of the country that our process is equitable and transparent.

Creating the new legislative maps for New Jersey should be a forward-looking process that considers the newest data that is available; but the process should also be nonpartisan, fair, and responsive to the local needs of the citizens. In the last 11 years that I have lived in South Orange, I have seen a growing number of Asian families move into our District. In fact, this year marked the third year in a row that South Orange and Maplewood celebrated Diwali, the Festival of Lights, as a community, with over 500 participants and attendants.

Like many other Asian American families, shortly after having kids my parents decided to move to West Orange so that they could be close to our family and involved in their grandchildren's day-to-day lives. My parents rely on us for some things, and we rely on them for other things, but it helps to keep our culture strong.

My story is not unique. Many other Asian friends and families have similar situations where their parents have also moved over to West Orange to be close to the SOMA area. What is unique, however, is that I live less than 7 miles from my parents and a 10-minute drive to their house, but we are in two very different congressional districts. My family and I live in Congressional District 10; my parents live in Congressional District 11. West Orange and South Orange have a number of similar interests, whether it be these family relationships, the access to the train, the lack of boundaries between the Oranges, or the general demographics. Yet our legislative districts are split.

The growing and essential Asian population is split in numerous congressional districts, even though we are all within 20 minutes of one another and essentially the same town. In fact, my kids attend India School in Livingston, and we frequently attend other gatherings with other Indian Americans in West Orange, Livingston, and Parsippany. We often hit up the Parsippany restaurants with good Indian food. Yet, once again, our growing political power is split because we are all in different congressional districts.

I hope that you will consider this growing Asian population in the area, and our political rights to express how the community feels when determining the most fair and equitable map for the future.

Lastly, like others have noted, I, too, hope you will share a draft of the map and conduct another hearing for the public to voice their opinions after that draft is shared.

Thank you for your time today.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Anna Rivera.

Ms. Rivera.

A N N A “C U Q U I” R I V E R A: Good evening, everyone. Happy holidays to all.

Commission members, my name is Anna “Cuqui” Rivera. I am here with some of my neighbors, friends, colleagues, and family from the NAACP New Brunswick Chapter, who I just adore and have worked with for many years. I am also from the Latino Action Network, and I fully support the racial equity map that was submitted by the Fair Districts Coalition.

I am a lifetime member of the New Brunswick community, located in District 6 and District 12 on the proposed map. This map was

shown to this Commission on December 5, in an in-person hearing. It was made based on data from the Census Bureau and painstakingly worked on to be as fair and comprehensive as possible.

CD12 is a very diverse community made up of significant Latino, Asian, and African American communities. Latinos in District 12 made up 23.8 percent of its population, and I have been a community advocate for well over 30 years here, with most of my work being focused on CD12 -- proposed -- and now statewide. The District has a strong foundation in community resources. These services include the Puerto Rican Action Board -- where I have and continue to be employed for close to 35 years now. We have immigration programs, housing programs, there are many food banks in the City of New Brunswick and this District, and youth-focused services; services that, like these, are crucial and are invaluable to Latino growth.

We have various world-class health services like the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, Saint Peters, mental health programs, The Cancer Institute of New Jersey, and federally qualified health centers included in this District as well. This District has many quality schools: Rutgers University; Middlesex County College, with three campuses; and numerous bilingual and bicultural preschools. CD12 also has adequate transportation services, central transit thruways like Route 18, Route 1, and the New Jersey Turnpike. Our public transportation services include the suburban bus line that goes back and forth from New York to Trenton; New Jersey Transit buses and trains, as well; free Rutgers and county college buses for students. And all these services are major to supporting everyone in this District and, most especially, its most vulnerable, where I serve the most.

I believe these services have been successful because of many of the community collaborations, like ours with the NAACP New Brunswick Chapter, who I love with my whole heart. And these resources need to evolve proportionately as these communities' needs also evolve.

I thank you and all of us for this work. I know that we are all working very hard to make this next district map the best possible for everyone as well as -- I'm sorry -- as best possible for everyone, as we will live with it for the next 10 years.

This is why I support this racial equity map presented by the total of the Fair Districts Coalition, which has been mentioned many times here this evening.

And thank you again, and happy and blessed holidays.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much for your comments.

David Mendoza.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Mendoza is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Mary Lysinger.

MARY LYSINGER: Hello.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good evening.

MS. LYSINGER: Good evening. I have just some brief comments.

My name is Mary Lysinger, and I have been a resident of Union Township for 20 years, and I'm speaking today to support making Union Township whole in any redistricting plans. I feel that it's important for our town's unity.

In addition, it creates a cohesive voice for services that affect all of the town's residents, like the train station and the many transportation routes that have access in our town. Union Township residents and leadership should also be able to have one representative to turn to with their concerns, rather than the current situation -- where leaders have to address multiple representatives, and some Township residents may find that the representative they knew in the past is no longer theirs when they move across town to a new district.

Our township has one town hall, one high school, and one name. We also deserve to be located fully in one congressional district, CD7.

Thank you for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Jeannine LaRue.

Ms. LaRue.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, she is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay.

Adrian Mapp.

A D R I A N O. M A P P: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good evening.

MAYOR MAPP: Good evening.

I am Adrian Mapp, Mayor of the great City of Plainfield, and we are in Legislative Congressional District 12, under the able leadership of Bonnie Watson Coleman.

It is important to note the cultural links between communities of color, and what can happen for minority representation and minority engagement when communities of color are linked together. For example,

Plainfield, Franklin, and Trenton are communities that have significant numbers of African Americans, Caribbean Americans, and Americans born in Africa who are members of the same civic organizations, places of worship, sororities, and fraternities.

As a Commission, you have the important responsibility to stand against racial gerrymandering akin to what we have seen in other parts of the country, and instead strive for continuity of cultural components, including the connection of Black communities where possible.

As a member of NJ12, I submit to you that the aforementioned reasons are among the main reasons why this District elected the first African American woman, despite being over 60 percent white. We must not use Plainfield, in any way, as a political football to dilute the quality of its representation in Washington, or in a way that could reduce Black congressional representation.

Diversity and inclusion must not be ignored in the redistricting conversation. Plainfield needs to stay in the New Jersey 12 so as not to disrupt the cultural homogeneity of the district. We have been used over the last three or four decades as a political football, where we are moved every 10 years into a different congressional district. And that is not what we want, that is not what is good for our City. We want to stay in the 12th under the able leadership of Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman.

Thank you, and may God bless.

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

Bruce Morgan.

Is Mr. Morgan available?

BRUCE MORGAN: I'm here.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Go right ahead; you may speak.

MR. MORGAN: Good evening, Commissioners, Judge Wallace, and all elected officials and appointed officials this evening.

I want to thank you for holding these hearings, and I hope you'll give the public an opportunity to comment on the map you recommend before final adoption.

It is my pleasure to address you this evening on an important topic: Minority representation.

My name is Bruce Morgan, I am the first Vice President of the New Jersey State Conference of NAACP, responsible for overseeing 14 units across parts of Union, Somerset, and Middlesex County. I am the President of the New Brunswick Area Branch NAACP, and I'm also a member of the National Resolutions Committee.

As an officer of the NAACP -- but more so, and most importantly, as a citizen -- I felt compelled to bring to your attention a matter of voting rights and fairness. It is important to note the links between communities of color that exist in the current map of New Jersey's 12th District. Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman is not only a fine representative, she embodies proof of what can happen when communities of color are not placed on an island, but rather linked to similar communities.

I repeat what others often said, and what you heard tonight. Plainfield, Franklin Township, and Trenton are communities that have significant numbers of African Americans, Caribbean Americans, and Americans born in Africa that all share a common membership in many of the same organizations, churches, sororities, places of employment, and

fraternities. These communities, while not geographically contiguous, share a culture that is undeniable.

Attempts to dilute the Black vote by splitting these communities is racial gerrymandering, akin to what has been seen in other parts of the county. But, in this instance, opponents of minorities selecting a (indiscernible) person of their choice will hide their hand by discussing the benefits of placing Scotch Plains and Fanwood in different districts, without revealing that this is the gateway that makes connecting key communities possible -- key Black communities possible.

African Americans in this state are active voters, and despite being only 13 percent of the population at times, African Americans represent nearly 37 percent of the vote. We should, at the very least, ensure that a district that has elected the first African American woman, despite being over 60 percent white, is maintaining the communities of Plainfield, Franklin, and Trenton, and that we're allowed to remain in the same district.

I am here urging the New Jersey State Redistricting Commission to draw a racially equitable congressional map; and I lend my support to what you heard here today of the racial equity map, which was recently released by the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice and other New Jersey advocacy groups. This map is supported by the Association by Black Women Lawyers of New Jersey, Fair Share Housing Center, The Inclusion Project at Rutgers, Latino Action Network Alliance, League of Women Voters of New Jersey, NAACP State Conference, New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice, New Jersey Black Issues Convention, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, South Asian Legal Defense and Education Fund, and South Asian Social Justice.

We cannot take time and shake our heads at the actions that dilute voting rights around the country, and then sit idly by while the same strategy is employed here in our state in more subtle ways. This is an issue of fairness, plain and simple.

I thank you for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments, sir.

James Harris.

Mr. Harris.

J A M E S H A R R I S: Good evening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good evening.

MR. HARRIS: My name is James Harris. I live in Montclair, New Jersey, and I am the President of the New Jersey Association of Black Educators. And I support the racial equity map that has been developed by the Institute for Social Justice and other related organizations.

Let me thank the Commission, in particular you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership and dynamic presence in the State of New Jersey.

I am here to speak in favor of keeping the southern end of Montclair in the 10th Congressional District. If it's possible, the Township of Montclair should be in the same district. But if it's necessary to divide it, the southern end of Montclair -- which is the center of African American presence in the Township of Montclair -- belongs in the 10th. We have been well represented by the 10th Congressional Congressman, Donald Payne Jr.; and before him, Donald Payne, Sr. In fact, it was the 10th Congressional District that was able to elect the first African American in modern history from the State of New Jersey, and that had everything to do with the fact

that there were common interests and racial concentration within the area served by the 10th Congressional District.

I also wanted to make sure that it's understood that any demolition or disaggregation of the voting strength of the southern end of Montclair would do tremendous harm to racial justice in the State of New Jersey. I think it's all so clear to all of us that New Jersey has developed such a deep racial segregation that, very often, if there's no presence -- a significant presence -- of people of a certain racial ethnic group, that interest seems to get lost, and disrespected and disregarded.

The 10th District of Montclair is well represented in all aspects. In fact, I'm very proud to say that because of the 10th District, I am represented in Congress by one African American Senator, one Latino Senator, and an African American Congressman -- one of the few districts in the State of New Jersey where that is present.

So I want to appeal to the Commission to do due diligence and do everything possible to make sure that the African American vote, and other people of African ancestry, is maintained so that the voting strength and the representation is not diminished in any way. Montclair is bordered by several significant towns, including Clifton, Bloomfield, Orange, East Orange; as well as West Orange, and Verona. So -- but it's currently split between the 11th District and the 10th District.

So it is my fervent hope and recommendation that the 10th District be continued within the 10th Congressional District, so that we can be assured that the representation of our representative will be reflective of the values of the African American community in the 10th District.

Thank you for your hard work, and I, too, hope that before the final vote is taken that all of us will have an opportunity to see the (technical interference).

JUSTICE WALLACE: Sir, I could not hear your last comment, but I thank you very much for your presentation this evening.

Steve Hockaday.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Hockaday is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Samuel Frisby.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Samuel Frisby is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Jann Skelton.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Jann Skelton is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Teska Frisby.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Teska Frisby is not present.

JUSTICE WALLACE: That's all I have on my list; I may have overlooked them because I ran the two lists for Monday and tonight. Do you have any persons who I have not called?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we have Mr. David Boyko and Ms. Michelle Delisfort.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right.

David Boyko.

DAVID BOYKO: I'm here, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the time this evening, and thank you to you and the other Commissioners for taking the time, and no doubt enduring the pain of this important public service of being on the Redistricting Commission.

I speak to you tonight because it has come to my attention that the town I live in, Millburn-Short Hills, may be shuffled about yet again between congressional districts. And I'm testifying to express my opposition to that, and to explain why such a move is contrary to the interests of the good citizens and voters of our town, and contrary to principles of good districting.

There are two main issues I wish to bring to your attention; the first being the community of interest principle. One of the major issues facing our town is flooding from the Rahway River, a risk that not only affects Millburn-Short Hills repeatedly over the years, but has affected several other towns in the current 7th District as well. Separating Millburn-Short Hills from those towns dilutes our ability to secure Federal support to solve this problem, which is far larger than just the town or the County can handle, and it would be against the interest of the homeowners and the businesses who live and work here.

When a problem like this affects a broad range of constituents within a district, we have a better chance of getting attention and a better chance of getting Federal remedies than if we're just one town being affected, with a number of other towns that don't suffer from this in the same way that we do. I think it's important for the affected towns to act together to exercise their political power in unison to solve this, and it's important to secure renewed efforts from the Army Corps of Engineers at the Federal level to help solve this waterway issue. It would not be fair to impose the loss of this continuity of representation on the voters of Millburn-Short Hills.

Further, it's clear that this current officeholder has recognized the importance of the issue and taken action to help the constituents and the

district in this town. Setting aside any question of reelection, why should Millburn-Short Hills alone lose that knowledge and expertise if we're shuffled off to a different district? As one of the other speakers spoke about climate change and water issues, it's clear that knowledge takes years to acquire, and it would be harming our interests if that were taken away.

The second issue I wish to bring to your attention is one of anti-gerrymandering. Because as a citizen and a voter here in Millburn-Short Hills, I'm getting tired of our town being shuffled among districts like a chit on the political map. Twenty years ago, after the 2000 Census, Millburn was removed from the 7th District and split up between the 10th and 11th Districts. Ten years ago, there was another census and another map, and Millburn was put back together and put into the 7th. How is this consistent with fairness -- that we're kind of transient constituents of one district or another? We're finally together, this town, in one district. We're able to see that our problems are answered by Washington, and I ask you not to let this town be the subject of political machinations once again.

In view of these fundamental principles, Commission and members of the Commission, and Chair, I ask that you leave Millburn-Short Hills in place in the 7th District. And I thank you for your efforts for this tough task.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Ms. Delisfort.

MICHELE DELISFORT: Good evening, Chairman Wallace and Commissioners. My name is Michele Delisfort, and I am the Mayor of the Township of Union. I was raised in Union, I returned to the Township over 20 years ago to raise my children in the community that I call home, and I

remain committed to the township's continued social, economic, and political progress.

I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to thank the Commission for holding public meetings in several parts of the state, and making them accessible to all by holding in-person and virtual sessions.

I am here this evening to encourage the Commission to continue to allow public input throughout this process, and also to maintain transparency about the criteria that will be used. The map must strictly comply with the Voting Rights Act, specifically Section 2, which prohibits against voting practices and procedures -- including redistricting plans, as we heard this evening -- that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or membership in a language minority group.

Beyond strict compliance with the Voting Rights Act, the Commission should adopt a policy of an anti-gerrymandering map with partisan fairness tests. I urge this Commission to draw a fair map that keeps communities of interest together and protects the districts that are majority minority districts. A good map is one that protects minority communities from being separated or merged into the minimum number of districts possible. Having communities of color that can elect representatives that share their interest is extremely critical.

Congressman Payne, Jr., has been a forceful advocate in Washington for communities of color. As you are aware, he serves as the Congressman of CD10, which includes select districts in the Township of Union; a Township which is proud of its diversity and continues to proactively encourage equity and inclusiveness on all levels. The section of the townships located in the 10th Congressional District embodies the issues

that Congressman fights for. The agenda that he pursues mirrors some of the socioeconomic challenges -- and benefits -- faced by the residents in the Township's 10 districts.

In my opinion, an experienced CD10 is uniquely qualified to take advantage of the opportunities that Congressman Payne, Jr., is in the position to create through his committee assignments. Allowing all of our voices the chance to be heard is critical.

So to that end, I urge the Commission to draw fair congressional districts that are responsive to the voters. And I sincerely thank you for your hard work and for considering this testimony in making your decision.

Have a good evening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you, Mayor, for your comments.

Do we have anyone else in the waiting room?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: We do not, Mr. Chairman.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, I thank everyone tonight. Now, of course, we have the challenge of reviewing the testimony and the exhibits to produce a fair, equitable congressional map. We certainly have our task in front of us.

Do we have a motion to adjourn?

MR. STEINHARDT: So moved.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Is there a second?

MS. FULLER: Second.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Moved and second.

All in favor say aye.

ALL: Aye.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Any opposed? (no response)

Hearing none, this meeting is now adjourned. I'm sure we will get together in the very near future to begin a very difficult task.

Thank you and goodnight, and stay safe.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)