



To: Honorable Chair Murphy, Vicechair Klevorn and Members of the House Redistricting Committee
From: Rosa Tock, Executive Director
Re: Testimony about redistricting principles and communities of interest
Date: August 25, 2021

Good afternoon Madame Chair and members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Rosa Tock and I am the Executive Director of the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs. First of all, let me start by saying that the Latino Council is **very** honored to testify before this committee. This is a historic opportunity that only happens once every 10 years, at a **pivotal** time when our nation and our state are becoming more diverse, multicultural, and multiracial. As a state agency tasked to work for the implementation of the economic, social, legal, and political **equality** of Latino Minnesotans, we believe that democracy is strengthened when all voices can participate and are reflected in the redistricting process.

We have a unique opportunity this year to make sure that every Minnesotan is fairly represented in new district maps and that this process is transparent, providing the public with meaningful and accessible opportunities to engage and be heard. This also requires making sure that the information is also available in Spanish and accessible to Latinos with disabilities.

Secondly, the Council and our community are not surprised that the 2020 Census Redistricting data show that the Latino population continues to grow in the nation and in Minnesota. Now we know that Latinos are 62.1 million strong in the United States, representing 19% of the total U.S. population, **we are** the nation's second largest population group. In Minnesota we have grown 38% since the last decennial census, outpacing the state's growth of 7.6%. And Minnesota Latinos grew more than the Latino population in the US, which grew 23%.

In the North Star State, we are now 345,640 Latino Minnesotans, representing 6.1% of the total population. Last week, the state demographer Susan Brower showed to this committee a map of where we live. Though concentrated in the metro area, the suburbs, and regions of central and southern Minnesota, after the white population, we are the second population group in terms of prevalence in the state. There is a growing Latino population in at least 37 counties, although we know that Minnesotans of Latino heritage live in every county.

Ms. Brower also indicated that the main factor driving Minnesota's overall population growth is not international or domestic migration, but births, very likely from racially diverse Minnesota families since the white population is declining.

Latinos consider Minnesota their home. We work, study, play, worship, vote, and pay taxes in all corners of the state. We have a stake in the communities where we live, and we want a better future for our children. We are not only talking about first generation immigrants such as myself, but especially about second, third, fourth, and fifth generation Latinos who keep contributing to the economic vitality of the state, but also to the political strength and representation of Minnesota. The Latino population growth is very likely one of the main factors behind Minnesota having kept eight congressional seats.

All of this evidence means that policy makers and those who are drawing the new legislative and congressional district maps have the responsibility to make conscious and intentional decisions using a Latino lens and Latino perspectives.

I know that today's testimonies will focus on Congressional Districts 4 & 5, but I wanted to share with you that two weeks ago, our Council visited Red Wing, in Goodhue County, to listen to the experiences of some of our constituents. Although we did not talk about redistricting and mapping, we learned about their interests and what they value. These residents value their parks, the outdoors, the safety they feel in Red Wing. They particularly noted the many strong bonds that unite them as Latinos, through their families, their service providers, their churches, their leaders, or the nonprofits that support them with programming and services.

They expressed that they feel part of Red Wing, but shared with us how they could become even better integrated into the community where they live. Specifically, they are interested in removing barriers to accessing health clinics. They lack public transit to bring their kids to school and back. They identified the need for more diverse and bilingual staff in schools and other public settings. They showed a desire to work with decision makers at the local and state level. And they mentioned several other support services that could help their communities thrive.

The Council understands that we cannot generalize and draw conclusions from one town or community to draw the lines, but this is just one of a myriad of authentic examples of how the redistricting process needs to genuinely respect our communities' aspirations and interests, keeping them compact in compliance with the redistricting principles of **Protection of racial, ethnic and language minority groups** and **preserving communities of interest**.

In keeping with these principles, Latinos seek an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice, that understand their needs and deliver in ways that reduce the racial inequities that are still an obstacle for too many in order to reach their full potential.

Also, it will be important to prioritize unity over division, guaranteeing that communities that share the same jurisdiction and interests are kept together. Slicing and dividing is confusing for districts and weakens minority communities.

Over the next weeks and months both the legislature and the courts will have a chance to hear directly from a multitude of communities, some with competing interests, others with interests that will intersect in many different ways: by occupation, location, economic activity, language, etc. In the end, we ask that the new lines are drawn in compliance with the U.S. Constitution and the Voting Rights Act **and its prohibition of vote dilution** as top criteria, while respecting our communities of interest.

The Council will join you as we listen and understand those issues better. All along this process, consider the Council as a resource to help you connect and understand Latino stories as these maps are envisioned.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify this afternoon. I'll be happy to respond to any questions.