



September 29, 2021

Written testimony re: Community Maps to Inform Minnesota's Redistricting Process

My name is May Yang and I am testifying as a representative for the Our Maps MN campaign. I want to emphasize the need for a people-focused redistricting process and the importance of preserving communities of interest. To accomplish this, **I urge that you utilize [community developed maps](#) to inform how you draw district lines.**

The Our Maps MN campaign is a nonpartisan grassroots campaign that is committed to a community-focused, accessible, and transparent redistricting process in Minnesota. Our campaign builds off the momentum of our work on the 2020 Census through the [Minnesota Census Mobilization Partnership](#), which created a strong infrastructure for civic engagement and partnership between communities, nonprofits, community organizations, and grantmakers. The Partnership's efforts helped lead Minnesota to the #1 spot in self-response for the 2020 Census and reached over 1.3 million people. We think this collective effort contributed to Minnesota retaining its 8th Congressional seat.

The Our Maps MN campaign sees redistricting as the logical next step after the 2020 Census effort -- after an unprecedented effort to ensure that historically undercounted communities were counted, our focus is now on ensuring that communities are fairly represented and reflected in how the lines are drawn. **The campaign aims to engage historically underrepresented BIPOC communities in the redistricting process and seeks to achieve fair legislative and congressional district maps that reflect input from communities, and in particular BIPOC communities.**

This summer, the Our Maps MN campaign and the Minnesota Council on Foundations partnered with 12 BIPOC led and serving organizations to develop Community of Interests maps across the state of Minnesota. These organizations are: African Career, Education & Resource, Inc., Anika Foundation, Asian American Organizing Project, CAPI USA, Communities Organizing Latinx Power and Action, Deaf Equity, Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research, Islamic Civic Society of America, Native American Community Development Institute, Pillsbury United Communities, The Council on American-Islamic Relations, and Voices for Racial Justice.

The community mapping process included over 100 hours of training, redistricting education and awareness, community outreach and engagement, community listening sessions, and map drawing. **The organizations worked with BIPOC communities across Minnesota to produce over 40 community of interest maps.** This not only shows that the community wants to and can be engaged in redistricting but that they fully understand the impacts that district lines have for the immediate future and for decades to come. As such, it is critical that these community maps be used to inform how district lines are drawn.



All of these community developed maps are viewable online at <https://districtr.org/event/ourmapsmn>. Every map that was created by Our Maps MN cohort members is labeled as follows "Organization name, Geographical Region, Date". When you click on a map, you will be brought to a detailed view showcasing where the community exists within current district boundaries. This view also showcases streets, coordinates, and demographic information using Census block information. Beyond this, each map is accompanied by narrative information about the community and their interests. These stories identify points of interest for a community and resources that are critical to their wellbeing. This data was provided by community members and should be read to fully understand each map.

In summary, I ask that you prioritize preservation and consideration of communities of interest. More specifically, I ask that you reference the maps created by Our Maps MN campaign members on the Our Maps MN Districtr site when you are drawing lines. These maps outline where communities of interest are and illustrate who lives there and why. If we want to achieve fair district maps that truly reflect all Minnesota communities it is essential that communities of interest be kept intact and that community maps be prioritized when drawing district lines.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am happy to answer any questions or provide further information.

Sincerely,

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