

OCTOBER 14, 2021

THANK YOU

We are grateful to the members of this committee and particularly Chair Murphy for the work that went in to making these hearings accessible and accountable to the public this committee serves. You are known for being a collaborative, and diligent legislator and it's been evident throughout this process.

On behalf of our members, allies, and grassroots democracy partners, who tirelessly worked on redistricting, we'd like to recognize Rep. Klevorn, for your partnership on Redistricting and the level of integrity you've engaged in this work. You have been a great listener, a problem solver, and an authentic leader in this work. Thank you.

As you continue to work on your proposed maps, I urge Chair Murphy, Vice-Chair Klevorn and the members of this committee to make the proposed maps publicly available and allow for public input, through additional public hearings, so Minnesotans can engage in this important democratic process and speak to how proposed maps impact their lives and communities.

It is extremely important that the legislature write clear redistricting principles and draw maps that give provide racial, ethnic, and language minorities equal and equitable opportunity to participate in the political process and be able to elect candidates of their choice. We are not asking for special treatment, we are asking that proposed principles and maps not dilute, diminish, or create a risk of cracking, stacking, and packing of racial, ethnic and minority voters.

The 2021 proposed maps are an opportunity to create an inclusive Minnesota map that captures and fairly reflects the demographic-shift our state demographer has documented with the census data. A common complaint we hear from Indigenous and Minnesotans of Color across the state is that for too long, they have been unseen by the political parties, and have had limited opportunity influence on policy decisions or policy issues given priority.

PROPOSED LANGUAGE

On behalf of our members, allies and supporters thank you the work that went into drafting this bill.

- Thank you for the clear definition of communities of interest and prioritizing that principle. We appreciate that the definition does not include relationships to political parties, candidates, or incumbents.
- I continue to urge this Committee to not link Convenience and Compactness as one principle. Much like an arbitrary standard deviation, Compactness is not required by the constitution, and we have already heard several community members testify over the last few weeks that compactness does not necessarily lead to maps that respect communities of interest. If compactness is included, please consider putting it as a separate and/or last principle.
- Lastly, Common Cause and our allies are disappointed the bill does not include any provisions ending the practice of prison gerrymandering. Black Minnesotans constitute about 12% of the state population but

make up about 36% of the incarcerated population. Prison gerrymandering unfairly inflates a block of voter's power at the expense of others. This is a civil rights issue, as the current system deprives individuals of their right to have their interests represented.

COMMON CAUSE MN's LEADERSHIP IN REDISTRICTING – organizing & mobilizing

Since 2017, we've worked to partner with statewide grassroots organizations and groups to educate and organize Minnesotans about the census and its connection to their representation, what is redistricting and how it connects to issues they care about. We've met with dozens of statewide local chambers of commerce, farmers market growers/small farmers, industry associations, rotary clubs, and other civic organization. We've knocked on thousands of doors during this time asking Minnesotans what they wanted from this process and their district voting maps.

Two key messages emerged from our organizing; 1) Minnesotans expect their interests to come first in this process, ahead of party and partisan interests and 2) Minnesotans are invested in strong and healthy democracy, believe in a transparent process, and want and want political accountability to constituents – that didn't change because of partisan affiliation.

In this last month alone, Common Cause's members, allies and supporters have submitted 1,674 written statements to this committee and 2,100 to the Senate Redistricting Committee - they deeply care and want to be heard. This energy is also transferring over to participation in the MN Special Redistricting Panel hearings.

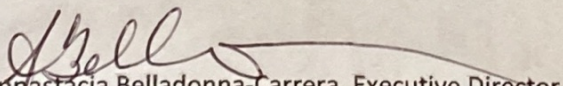
BIPOC COMMUNITIES ARE ENGAGED

Our organizing work is twofold; we've worked to engage and mobilize disenfranchised Minnesotans across the state, and we've also worked to support Indigenous and Minnesotans of Color who are at times disparately impacted by this process. We've worked with our democracy partners in supporting the OurMapsMN grassroots campaign which is driving the work of about a dozen BIPOC-led organizations and groups who are mapping their communities and doing outreach. I continue to work with four community organizers within the AAPI, Somali and Latinx communities to educate others about redistricting and its process, what we are finding is the more they make the connection between the issues they care about and redistricting, the more exited they are and want opportunity to influence the process through direct engagement.

Minnesota is growing diverse, and we are seeing a significant population growth in multi-racial and minority groups compared to the 2010 census.

We are grateful to the members of this committee for dedicating your time to this important issue and authentically engaging in getting to a good bill that puts Minnesotans first.

Respectfully submitted,


Anriastacia Belladonna-Carrera, Executive Director
Common Cause MN
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