



October 28, 2021

Dear Reps. Klevorn, Murphy and Torkelson & Senators Johnson, Kiffmeyer and Isaacson:

We are community organizers representing the Minnesota Immigrant Movement (MIM). We came together to build solidarity and build movement amongst Latino Minnesotans around issues impacting us.

We are writing to share who we are as Latino Minnesotans, where we live, and how our issues have been represented by elected officials. Latino Minnesotans live in St. Peter, Leisure Center, Waseca, Glencoe, Wilmar, Faribault, Ferment, St. James, Worthington, Madelia, Albert Lea, Rochester, Northfield, St. Paul, Bloomington, Shakopee, Burnsville, Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center, Minneapolis and Austin, MN. Minnesota Immigrant Movement (MIM) has worked with statewide Latino communities for more than 15 years. Additionally, we have been bridging to mobilize all immigrant communities alongside Latino Minnesotans to stand in solidarity around immigration and other key issues. We, the organizers, see ourselves as a network of support who connect communities to resources and advocate on behalf of Latino Minnesotans who lack community resources and have language and cultural barriers.

Latino Minnesotans are the backbone of Minnesota's agriculture industry. If you travel along Southwestern Minnesota, such as Worthington, you will see Latino Minnesotans from Guatemala and others working in canneries and processing of pork. In Albert Lea and Austin, we are the workforce that keep the pork processing facilities strong and help grow pigs and cows. We are the workforce that feeds Minnesotans, the United States and the World; our strong contribution to the billion dollar Agriculture industry has revitalized numerous Southern Minnesotan towns and cities.

Latino Minnesotans suffer from a lack of resources. Companies take advantage of workers by not paying equitably, going through discrimination, not giving vacation or sick leave, and housing conditions are bad. There is no health insurance. They have no support from local city councils or mayors. And as the Nation saw in 2020 during COVID, the meat packing industry horribly treated the workers and put their safety at risk while Minnesotans and the Country were seeing meat shortages. [Here](#) is a national article.

"You ask me for my voice and I approach you and you don't listen to me, what else can you do?" We want to be heard and be included in the decision-making process in an equitable way. We are not asking for special treatment, just fair treatment. As communities and families we pay federal, state and local taxes regardless of immigration status. Those who may not have legal immigration status don't get exemption

from paying taxes that contribute to the billions collected by state and local coffers. We've contributed to and driven economic growth in many greater MN areas previously suffering.

MN is our home; we care about Minnesota. We do not need handouts, but we also do not need legal and political barriers for Latino Minnoestans to fully continue to contribute to a better economy in Minnesota.

Latino Community Organizers, not trained, came together to work for Driver License for ALL when the State of Minnesota failed to provide some with the opportunity to have a driver's license. A driver's license verifies that anyone on the road understands those rules of the road and you know how to drive safely just like everyone who drives with their driver's license. Through the grassroots "Licenses for All" bill's campaign, we learned about the problems/barriers facing Latino Minnesotans that have lived here for generations and those calling home for many years. Since 2010 we've introduced this bill every legislative session and each session it has failed to pass; it even failed to pass when the democrats controlled all three chambers: the Senate, the House and the Governorship. We have taken hundreds of community members to testify. We were either ignored or barely gained the attention of legislators. This bill died in the back-room negotiating table. We really saw this failure as the lack of elected officials who meaningfully represented us and cared about our welfare. We don't need elected officials to thank us for keeping Minnesota's agricultural economy going; we need them to give us equal opportunities. Many families were left without opportunity to have their voice heard or with the opportunity to vote for candidates who would see the importance of the issue - they do not believe in their current legislators. Most of them care about their children's education, health care, safety in their community, work, equality and love of family. Bringing the issue of driver's licenses to elected officials opened a lot of hope to the people, but when the state did not pass this law many did not want to vote anymore, there was a lot of distrust. They have no opportunity for their representatives to see this issue as important and to give it priority. They have no opportunity to choose a candidate from their group.

Latino families living in St. Peter, Leisure Center, Waseca, Glencoe, Willmar, Faribault, Ferment, St. James, Worthington, Madelia, Albert Lea, Rochester, Northfield, Bloomington, Shakopee, Burnsville, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, Minneapolis, Austin and St. Paul, MN share many common interests. I ask you to prioritize keeping communities together when you draw maps of districts with our communities. I also ask that if there are other principles of redistricting that conflict or have natural tension with the principle of community of interest, you give more importance to keeping our communities of interest intact and not dividing us among more districts than needed. Most importantly, we want you to give us a shot at being able to choose our own elected officials from our group.

Please do not dilute our ability to pick a candidate of our choosing or minimally influence the outcome of an election; particularly at the local level. You will dilute our political power and our votes become unimportant to non-Latino candidates. When you pack us into metro-centric areas, you do the same. I encourage you to carefully consider the Southern MN districts containing large emerging minority and Latino populations when you draw district lines so that we collectively get a chance at electing someone of our choice, maybe someone from our community, and that our issues will matter.

What you do today will impact the next generation of Latino Minnesotans. In most of the school districts in Southern Minnesota, Latino students make-up for the significant enrollment. Today, 1 in 20 Minnesotans identify as Latino or of Latino heritage; we are over 300,000 population strong. And in rural counties like Nobles and Watonwan, we make up a quarter of the population.

Voters should decide which of the paired incumbents will represent the district, not other politicians behind closed doors, so we ask that you not use principles that protect politicians or political parties. Political parties and partisan politics are not communities of interest.

You have a responsibility to ensure that the selection and application of redistricting principles do not affect us differently as Latino Minnesotans. We ask that as you draw maps you ask yourselves, how do these proposed maps impact Latino Minnesotans, does it pack them into districts to minimize their ability to vote for candidates of their choosing? Does it dilute their collective voting power to minimize their ability to vote for candidates of their choosing? We ask that you keep the people living within these districts in mind and not just the geography. Land doesn't vote, people vote.

You have a responsibility to ensure that redistricting principles applied allows us the opportunity to elect from our group a representative of our choice. The Voting Rights Act guarantee is not met by simply giving us the ability to vote for white candidates, only, if favored by Latinos. At the very least, we want the ability to help influence elections even if we are choosing white candidates running for office; especially in rural areas where we are a strong voting block helping to make our issues and our votes matter in the outcomes. Example, in Worthington, MN where the majority are Minnesotans of color and where Latino Minnesotans have literally recharged the local economy previously dying, we have yet to elect a Latino Candidates at State or local level and we have not been able to get a strong relationship with the elected officials. Two African Minnesotans who have successfully been elected to office in local government in Southern MN, have faced, and continue to face racial discrimination and harassment with little protection or support from their own local government bodies.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this letter as part of the redistricting process in MN. Thank you for keeping us together as a community of interest and not dividing us more than necessary. Thank you for not using principles that serve to protect politicians or political parties.

Finally, you have a responsibility to ensure that redistricting principles applied provide us the opportunity to elect from our group a representative of our choice. Likewise, thank you for asking yourselves, 'Do the district maps we are proposing, and the redistricting principles we are applying, work to pack or dilute Latino Minnesotans within their communities of interest to give more importance to geography, or needs of local government, or incumbents, or party's needs? Also, How are they impacting the collective voting power of Minnesotans of Color and Latino Minnesotans?

Respectfully submitted,



Jovita Fransico (Oct 29, 2021 10:36 CDT)

Jovita Fransico, Executive Director

The Minnesota Immigrant Movement (MIM)