



Good Afternoon Madam Chair and Members of the Redistricting Committee,

My name is Madeleine Lerner and I am the Organizing Manager for African Career, Education and Resource (ACER) based in Brooklyn Park. I am testifying today because communities of color in Minnesota, and across the country, are at risk of being divided as new map lines are drawn. There is a clear lack of adequate representation in the government and an overall need for more accessible resources. According to the newly released data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Minnesota's Black, Indigenous, and People of Color populations have grown substantially, and this is no different in Congressional District 5. I ask that you uplift community voices and direct your attention to diverse communities as you draw our district maps.

Redistricting should focus on supporting communities, building camaraderie, and creating opportunities for connection. In many cases, redistricting has caused unnecessary harm to constituents by dividing communities of interest. The African immigrant community in Congressional District 5 continues to grow each year. For many residents in Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center, there is a sense of underrepresentation in the government. Many of the tenant leaders ACER works with have stated a desire for officials to accurately represent their needs. Some of these needs include supported and fair housing with respectful management, the prioritization of community safety, and expansion of transportation access.

ACER's work primarily focuses on housing justice, health equity, and economic development. Through our work with tenants in CD5, we have discovered how necessary it is that Brooklyn Park be accessible to Brooklyn Center residents and vice versa. As part of our work through Our Maps Minnesota, we have hosted two mapping sessions thus far. Our most recent session focused on Georgetown Park Townhomes in Brooklyn Center. Important places named by tenants included Brooklyn Center High School, the African Market, and Restaurant Depot. These three sites are located in Brooklyn Center. However, tenants also mentioned Masjid Ar-Rahim Islamic Community Center and Hennepin Health Care Clinic, which are both in Brooklyn Park. All of these points of interest are crucial to CD5 residents as well as CD3 residents. To further reiterate the importance of community inclusion in redistricting, I have included two of the maps ACER has created. One is of the referenced Georgetown Park Townhomes map in Brooklyn Center and the other focuses on Autumn Ridge Apartments in Brooklyn Park.

One Autumn Ridge tenant stated, "We need to extend the bus service. The last bus comes at 9pm and rarely comes on Sundays."

One Georgetown Park tenant stated, "Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park have a lot of shopping centers, entertainment spots, and activities for kids. The freeway is also close and accessible to Georgetown Park."

Our redistricting process and district lines should be drawn in a way that is inclusive, transparent, and representative of diverse communities. I respectfully ask that members of the Redistricting Committee keep African and African immigrant communities together in the northwest suburbs by mapping their districts together so they have the opportunity to vote for candidates with shared values and be accurately represented. Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns about community diversity and representation within the redistricting process.

Sincerely,
Madeleine Lerner