



## CHANGE Illinois Testimony: Transparent and Accountable Representation

*May 25, 2021*

*Joint House and Senate Redistricting Committees*

*To: Chair Aquino and Chair Hernandez*

*From: Madeleine Doubek, Executive Director of CHANGE Illinois*

Thank you Chair Aquino, Chair Hernandez, and committee members for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Madeleine Doubek and I am the executive director of CHANGE Illinois and the CHANGE Illinois Action Fund. Both are nonpartisan nonprofits that educate, engage and advocate for ethics and efficiency in government and elections. CHANGE Illinois is a coalition of more than 30 organizations that have a history of advocating for an independent, transparent redistricting process.

The maps unveiled Friday night are built on old, flawed data that never was meant to be used for redistricting. We and many other organizations and community members have said this repeatedly. The American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates undercount Illinoisans by tens of thousands. Erasing these people from our maps is the equivalent of erasing cities like Oak Park, Rock Island, Quincy, or Buffalo Grove. The ACS data misses 41,877 people, that's more than one-third of a House district. These are real people whose representation matters.

The ACS sampling collection did not have the benefit of the historic, people-powered effort and state funding that the census did to ensure communities were counted, especially people in Black communities. Our state spent millions of tax dollars and enlisted the help of hundreds of community partners for this very reason. The ACS collection process lacks the trusted community partnerships and engagement with civil rights organizations that are needed to ensure an accurate count in historically disenfranchised communities.

Our state's fastest growing populations, Asian-American and Latino communities, as well as its largest growing counties -- Kendall, Kane, Champaign, and Monroe -- also are highly likely to have been undercounted in the ACS sampling.

Is this committee willing to risk disenfranchising all of these communities of color and others by proceeding with adopting new districts without complete census data?

How are we doing right by the people of Illinois when we take the entire map-drawing process out of their hands? Proceeding with this process without the data from the census presents a fundamental foundational issue.

We again urge you to step back from the brink and seek court approval to set aside deadlines to wait for the full census data. That's what leaders in California and Oregon have done. Michigan is seeking similar permission to set aside deadlines. Lawmakers in Maine have said they intend to do the same. Even Oklahoma, which already



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passed maps using the sampling data and not the full census, has committed to returning to revise maps once the census data arrives in mid-August.

At about 7:30 p.m. last Friday evening, committee members decided to unveil the long-awaited legislative maps. Rather than providing detailed maps that could be analyzed by community members so they could provide meaningful feedback at this week's hearings, the people of Illinois were left with PDFs with very few details or explanations that can be used to understand the effects the new maps would have on their communities. We don't know how many majority minority districts these maps create. What is the demographic data used to draw these maps? What is the voting age population in each district? What are the exact boundaries? We have none of that. Instead, lawmakers are forcing the people of this state to rely on guesswork to determine the ramifications of your decisions on their communities for the next decade.

A press release issued by the redistricting committees claims that the maps had the federal and state voting rights act "top of mind." Yet, the release stops short of guaranteeing these maps actually fulfill that promise, required by law, nor did it include the necessary data to demonstrate compliance with federal and state voting rights acts. This, again, is in spite of the fact that many who came to these hearings asked these committees to release a detailed compliance report with the map proposals.

The press release mentioned these hearings were to be held for the purpose of giving the public a chance to provide feedback on the proposals. Yet, the redistricting websites and ilga.gov had no list of the hearings giving people a chance to register to testify until yesterday afternoon. Again, after months and months of numerous groups pleading with committee members to provide two weeks' notice for these hearings, that minimal courtesy was not offered. Over the course of two months, we saw very few people attending the initial hearings because of the failure of lawmakers to meaningfully engage and involve the public. Instead of recognizing this and working to correct it, today we have another committee hearing announced to the public barely five days ago.

This track record of transparency failure was underscored a few hours ago when lawmakers unveiled new Illinois Supreme Court district maps without having made a mention of a plan to do so over the course of the 46 previous hearings. This is a missed opportunity for lawmakers to work with community groups to reimagine what equity looks like for our state's highest court.

What is to happen if new legislative, court or congressional maps are unveiled after these hearings? Will the public have the opportunity to review, understand and weigh-in on those maps or any changes?

People care about how the maps will affect their communities. In the last few weeks, the Michigan Independent Redistricting Commission started holding public hearings and more than 60 people are showing up at each of them. People care and they will participate, if an effort is made to reach them; if they're given meaningful opportunities. But little effort has been made to engage or accommodate people in Illinois.

The number of hours and times that hearings were held are meaningless if you rob people of the opportunity to be part of the discussion. The hours are meaningless if the people who did show up have their voices and views and input ignored. The hours are meaningless if all the decisions are made without them in a locked backroom.



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Everyone should be heard. Everyone should count. No voices or votes should be suppressed in Illinois. We urge you again, to stop and ask the courts for permission to set aside the constitutional deadlines so that we can wait for the full 2020 census data.

Everyone in Illinois deserves representation. Representation is supposed to be about the people, not the politicians. Everyone in Illinois deserves equitable redistricting centered on them and their needs.

Thank you.

Madeleine Doubek  
Executive Director  
CHANGE Illinois



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