



**Testimony of Will Gonzalez, Executive Director of Ceiba,  
Pennsylvania Legislative Reapportionment Commission**

Buenas tardes - Good afternoon.

My name is Will Gonzalez.

I am the Executive Director of Ceiba. Ceiba is a coalition of Latino community-based organizations in Philadelphia whose mission is to promote the economic development and financial inclusion of Philadelphia's Latino community through collaborations and advocacy aimed at ensuring their access to quality housing.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify today.

Redistricting is not easy, but it is not rocket science.

We encourage you to ensure that basic principles of demographics, geography, and equity guide the redistricting process.

Among these is the important concept of communities of interest, i.e., groups of people who live in a specific location, have collective interests, and share many things in common: customs, arts, social institutions, achievements and challenges.

The prioritization of communities of interest in redistricting in Pennsylvania is vital.

We urge you to draw legislative districts taking into account the streets, neighborhoods, and important hubs that make communities unique; consider landmarks, cultural districts, industries, employers, where kids go to school, where families go to church and the location of neighborhood based and social service organizations which serve them.

For example, in Philadelphia Hispanics live in all parts of the City but most Latinos live in Eastern North Philadelphia.

The Latino community of Eastern North Philadelphia epitomizes the definition of a Community of Interest.

It is a self-defined group of people who share bilingual and bicultural characteristics; that have their own culturally and linguistically appropriate nonprofit organizations, churches, schools, business corridors, and social institutions; that share common interests; and live in a compact urban footprint without geographic barriers.

The backbone of the Eastern North Philadelphia's Latino community is a robust network of nonprofit organizations.

A 2018 study by students from the University of Pennsylvania's Masters of City Planning found that 15 Latino nonprofits leveraged \$86 million in government grants to sustain 4,160 local jobs, generate \$222 million in wages and salaries, build 1,333 new homes, and rehab nearly 10,000 housing units.

While the full benefits of these investments are incalculable, they are collectively worth at least \$517 million per year. At that time, these 15 nonprofits transformed the social and physical landscape for some 124,000 households and 1,900 businesses in Philadelphia.

The work of these non-profits continues to benefit the community today.

The importance of the Latino community to the Commonwealth and the City of Philadelphia cannot be overstated.

Growth in the Hispanic population far outpaced that of the whole state and successfully offset the declines in population of other ethno-racial groups in the Commonwealth.

Pennsylvania's population only grew 2.4% between 2010 and 2020 or by about 300,000 people. In the same period, Pennsylvania's Hispanic population grew 45.8%, or by about 330,000 people. Growth in the Hispanic population far outpaced that of the whole State and successfully offset the declines in population of other ethno-racial groups in the Commonwealth. In other words, the Latino share of total population change in Pennsylvania was 110%.

In Philadelphia, the city's population growth was also fueled by the expansion of its Latino community. The total population of the City grew 5%, or by 77,791 people, between 2010 and 2020. During the same period, the Hispanic population of Philadelphia grew by 27%.

South Philadelphia, Allentown, Bethlehem, Reading, and many other jurisdictions in Pennsylvania also experienced growth in their respective Latino communities.

We request that you keep these Latino communities of interest intact with their corresponding State House and State Senate districts.

As you can see from my previous comments about the economic power of just 15 Latino nonprofits in Philadelphia, it is best for the economic development of the Commonwealth to keep Latino communities of interest intact within PA's legislative districts.

Ceiba looks forward to continuing this dialogue about redistricting with the Pennsylvania Legislative Reapportionment Commission.

Ceiba believes that we can work together with this Commission to ensure that Pennsylvania's redistricting process:

- Actively engages the public at every step of the process
- Draws maps in a manner which accurately reflect changes in the Commonwealth's population
- Avoids gerrymandering, and
- Takes affirmative steps to ensure that reapportionment does not run counter to the protections offered by the:
  - US and Pennsylvania Constitutions
  - Voting Rights Act, and
  - Principle of one person, one vote

Pennsylvania's Latino communities are ready to be stewards of change rather than victims of it.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.