

Good afternoon. Longtime hearings watcher; first-time speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to the members of the Legislative Reapportionment Commission. My name is William Madway. I'm a lifelong Pennsylvania resident. I've spent most of my life in Montgomery County; I also spent a number of years living, going to college and grad school, and working in Philadelphia. My professional experience includes marketing research, communication, entrepreneurship, teaching college, and advocacy.

I'm speaking on behalf of one of the organizations I volunteer with, the nonpartisan Pennsylvania Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism or RAC-PA. We are the social justice arm of the 40 Reform Jewish congregations in Pennsylvania, which can be found in over half the counties across the state.

We seek a world in which the core values embraced by the Reform Jewish Movement are reflected in society and public policy. Through education, advocacy, and activism, RAC-PA harnesses the passion, skills, and collective power of Pennsylvania's 40,000+ Reform Jews in pursuit of racial justice. To advance our vision, we build coalitions with allied communities and organizations at the forefront of driving societal change.

In concert with two coalition partners, Pennsylvania Voice and Fair Districts PA, we are working on the redistricting process, specifically, the redistricting of the PA House and Senate. Our goals are to end partisan gerrymandering, and create more opportunities for People of Color to have their voices represented in the General Assembly. Independent analysis shows that Pennsylvania's current House and Senate district maps rate poorly with respect to partisan bias and fair representation of People of Color. These inequities pose a major obstacle to solving the problems plaguing the people of Pennsylvania.

So let me turn now to our views on the maps proposed by the LRC last month. The proposed map for the PA House performs far better than the current House map by almost every measure. It opens the door for more minority representation, levels the playing field between the two parties, and provides districts that make much more sense for the people who live in them, by increasing the compactness of districts and reducing the number of county and other jurisdictional splits.

Looking specifically at representation for and by People of Color, we commend the LRC for creating 7 minority opportunity districts, and implore the LRC to retain these districts in the final version of its maps and consider other ways to improve minority representation. We urge the LRC to make specific changes in accordance with the testimony provided by our partners at PA Voice as they relate to the Unity Maps the organization created with the input of communities of color in their target counties.



Specifically, we request that you re-examine the minority representation in Allegheny and Lancaster counties.

Regarding the proposed Senate map, while it makes some improvements in compactness and splitting, it does little to expand minority representation. Our discussions with our partners lead us to strongly recommend that the LRC keep Allentown intact in a district drawn to maximize Latino participation in the body politic, and create a majority minority district in Southeast PA.

There is another problem with the proposed Senate map that we urge the LRC to address. According to analysis by our partners, many of the districts with state prisons, as well as districts in Central PA, Pittsburgh, and other portions of Southwest PA are well below the ideal population. In contrast, districts in Philadelphia and other Southeast PA counties are far above that number. In effect, the map as drawn dilutes the voting power of our fastest growing, most diverse regions, and maintains voting power in regions that have lost population. It is essential that the LRC correct what we and our partners see as the inequitable distribution of the population.

We commend the LRC for the strides it has made with respect to correcting decades of partisan gerrymandering, creating opportunities for greater representation of People of Color in the General Assembly, and including citizen mappers and other members of the public, as well as community groups like ours, in your work. We also want to thank you for your dedicated service to the people of Pennsylvania.

Redistricting is a challenging process that requires you to weigh and balance many priorities. When I face difficult decisions like those you are now facing, I often think of the words of Rabbi Hillel, one of most influential religious leaders and scholars of my faith, in particular:

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

You are on the right path; you have demonstrated courage and vision. But more change is needed. Now is the time.

That concludes my testimony. I will upload my remarks to the LRC website for the record. Thank you again for the opportunity to share our positions with you. I'll be happy to take any questions you might have.

