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Greetings distinguished members of the Legislative Reapportionment Commission.

My name is Salewa Ogunmefun and I am the Executive Director of Pennsylvania Voice, a nonpartisan partnership of over 45 state and local based organizations working year round to create a more accessible, inclusive, and representative democracy by amplifying the voices, leadership, and expertise of communities that have historically experienced deliberate barriers to civic participation. Our Keystone Counts coalition began our work around legislative reapportionment to ensure each community members across the state of Pennsylvania have the same opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice in 2017 and continues to be lead by

Alliance for Climate Education, Amistad Law Project, CampusVOTE Project, CASA, Common Cause PA, Make the Road Pennsylvania, and One Pennsylvania

Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to offer comments on the preliminary reapportionment map adopted by this commission several weeks ago. As you all have consistently noted, delays with the Census Bureau processing the data required to draw the maps have compressed the timeline significantly, and we appreciate the work that you all have done to urgently draft maps to ensure more equitable voting power for all of us in the 2022 election cycle.

Since receiving the plan, we have worked with our data analysts, expert mappers, and partner organizations to solicit and analyze feedback from residents of the growing Black, Latinx, and Asian communities across the Commonwealth. While our conversations remain ongoing, with more detailed and specific comments to be submitted to the record, I offer to this commission today an early summary based on what we have gathered.

Our initial feedback suggest the proposed maps are a marked improvement over previous Pennsylvania reapportionment plans in ensuring fair voting power for all and upholding the state constitutional mandate that “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania because of the race or ethnicity of the individual.” It is clear from these maps that the ability for the growing populations across the state to elect candidates of their choice was a priority for this commission, and we are committed to working with you all to ensure that the final maps create that ability equally in the Senate and in the House.

The Unity Maps submitted by Keystone Counts were developed by soliciting input from over 700 Pennsylvanians across 8 house districts from 5 counties experiencing rapid population growth

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and demographic changes across the commonwealth. While drafting our maps we focused on citizen voting eligible population to ensure the intention, voters electing candidates of their choice in these proposed districts, had the best opportunity to come to fruition. Our early racial polarized voting analysis suggests, with confidence, that polarized voting in Pennsylvania affects the ability of Black, Latinx, and Asian voters in Pennsylvania to elect candidates of their choice. Based on the proposed maps we're continuing this analysis with an emphasis in Berks, Dauphin, Lancaster, and Lehigh counties.

The map this commission proposed for **York** County is the most closely aligned with our Unity Map, matching nearly 90%. While the population growth has not met what is needed for a majority coalition district based on citizen voting eligible population, the proposed map indicates that intention, though there are ways to adjust to be more inclusive of York's significant Black and growing Latinx communities. We continue to seek input from our partners in York so that we can provide specifics of how that may be accomplished, you will hear from many of them over the next few hearings.

Currently, there are two House Districts in **Berks** County that represent the city of Reading, a city that is majority Latinx with a significant Black population. Our Unity map called for two house districts where a majority coalition based on voting eligible population had the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. The map proposed by this commission calls for the city of Reading to be represented by three House Districts, one with a majority Latinx voting eligible population. With respect to our priority of the ability for the Latinx and Black communities to elect candidates of their choice, we're continuing our research into polarized voting patterns in this region.

In **Lancaster** County, it was critical to allow the growing BIPOC populations within and near the city of Lancaster to elect a candidate as a community of interest. We applaud this commission for prioritizing that need over existing municipal boundaries in drafting of the house preliminary plan, as required by the intention of this process. At this time, we encourage the use of the citizen voting eligible population when adjusting proposed house district 50 and ask that the commission propose a Senate map that also aligns with your original intention. The current Senate proposal splits the metro area and its suburbs apart, combining them with more rural voters with potentially different interests, as testified to earlier in this process.

In **Allegheny** County, there is significant alignment between the proposed maps and the Unity Maps we submitted. One of the districts we proposed remains 73% intact. We continue to seek input from our partners in Allegheny County, many of whom you will hear from over the next few days of hearings, so that we can provide specifics of adjustments to the boundaries of the proposed maps in the city of Pittsburgh and Mon Valley where partners continue in relationship with community members.

In **Philadelphia**, we applaud the creation of two new house districts that allow for the significant Black population to increase their ability to elect candidates of their choice, and ask this

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commission to create additional opportunities for the Latinx and Asian populations to elect candidates of their choice. Our partners at Fair Districts PA are proposing a new opportunity district in the Senate based in Southeastern PA, and we encourage the LRC to strongly consider this proposal.

Though **Dauphin** County was not a county where our partners collected community of interest maps from members, several of our partners organize and build power in the Black and Latinx communities. It is notable that the city of Harrisburg, which is majority Black, is represented by three house districts. With respect to our priority of the ability for the Latinx and Black communities to elect candidates of their choice, we're continuing our research into polarized voting patterns in this region.

Similarly, **Lehigh** County remains a priority for several of our partner organizations. As we continue to gather feedback and research polarized voting patterns in the Allentown area, we have serious concerns about the bifurcation of Allentown in the proposed State Senate maps. The inclusion of Western Allentown into a district with parts of rural Lehigh and Berks counties dilutes the voting power of these residents. We encourage this commission to replicate the trend of previous commissions by keeping the city of Allentown, and the ability of the growing Latinx and significant Black populations living there, to elect candidates of their choice, whole.

We thank this commission for their work to create additional opportunity districts in geographies experiencing population growth, HD54 in **Montgomery** County and HD 116 which is located in **Luzerne** and **Fayette** Counties.

In relation to the **Senate** Map in general, we are researching the variance in population size of Senate districts in rural Pennsylvania as opposed to those in urban and suburban areas. Based on a cursory analysis, there are trends in these data that appear to show rural districts are significantly more likely to be far below the average district population. We understand the limitations imposed by Pennsylvania's political geography that have been noted in these hearings, but we want to be certain that the maps do not unduly overrepresent rural voters in a systematic manner, we encourage this commission to look into this data as well.

As a nonpartisan organization, we are focused on securing fair representation for Pennsylvania's BIPOC communities, not on gaining partisan advantage in the process. We believe these maps are a good starting point, an improvement over the maps of the past 30 years, and reflect a commitment by the Legislative Reapportionment Commission to take seriously the cause of racial equity and produce maps that are truly fair to all Pennsylvanians.

We appreciate the opportunity to work with you on this monumental task, and will be happy to provide any further input you may require.

With that I'll be happy to take any questions you may have.

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