

APPC 1/8/22 Meeting Testimony

Hello,

My name is Talib Morgan. I live in Scotch Plains. This is my sixth year as a resident, homeowner, and passionate advocate for the appreciation of difference in our town. I would like to ask for your consideration during the redistricting process.

Scotch Plains is an interesting town for our area of New Jersey. It is the home of an important first, the first African-American golf course in the country, Shady Rest Golf Club founded in 1921. That happened because even in 1921 African Americans were an important part of the fabric of the community. This community has also long been an important home to the Italian community from Montazzoli Italy who moved here during the early 20th century.

On a recent Facebook post on one of our community Pages, members of the community pointed out that a report of stats from United Van Lines suggested New Jersey experienced net negative population change of people moving to/from the state - meaning about 20k people, according to United Van Lines - left our state. There was an enthusiastic discussion around that stat - with blame being laid at the feet of everyone from the governor for generally being sucky (according to them) to counties for their high tax rates to overall cost of living. We know the truth, however. NJ is a great place to live and, in fact, we saw a population increase according to the census - often led by increasing numbers of black and brown people who choose to call New Jersey home.

This is happening in Scotch Plains and its sister community of Fanwood, as well. We see not just African-Americans and Italians but also increasing numbers of Latinos, South Asians, East Asians and many others moving into our community - making it more diverse, just as it's doing for our state. It is my request that the Commission give due consideration to the ways our community is changing both in the composition of the Commission and in the drawing of the legislative map such that equitable representation is a focus and concern of the process and that the map is reflective an effort to value and appreciate the wonderful amalgam of difference our state has become.

Thank You

Good afternoon. My name is Joan Peters and I live in Clark but am civically engaged in the Scotch Plains- Fanwood community with grandchildren in the Scotch Plains Fanwood school district. I am also a board member of Social Justice Matters based in Scotch Plains. I am here to testify asking for fairness for every voter.

Scotch Plains- Fanwood is predominantly white with a growing population of people of color. We are bordered by Plainfield, a predominantly Black community with a rich history, Westfield which is similar in makeup to SPF and Clark which is almost all white.

Our district represents for me what districts should be, where all voices can be heard and represented fairly. As the percentage of people of color rises as it has in the last census and will likely continue in the future, we need maps across the state to be drawn in a way so that as communities of color grow so do their political opportunities for greater representation.

I am here to ask for fair representation for all New Jerseyans of any color or political party. I want New Jersey to stand out for promoting democracy. Let us lead the way so that the voters can choose their leaders rather than the leaders choosing their voters. I recognize that the majority of the members of the Commission are white men, but I am asking you to make decisions that reflect the needs and perspectives of all New Jersey residents. By drawing maps in a fair way to ensure that people of color and other groups not well represented on this Commission like the LGBTQ community and women are empowered to participate in the process.

I thank you for your time.

Written Testimony

Good Morning Chairmen Jones, and Barlas, and other members of the reapportionment committee my name is Keshawn Porter. I live in East Orange, which is the Newark area. I am here to testify about important features of my community. I am currently a junior attending Rowan university, majoring in Law/Justice with a minor in Psychology. After my tenure at Rowan, I aspire to be a Parole Officer for the State of NJ. As a student I am active on campus, with membership in Alpha Phi Sigma Criminal Justice Honor Society and an Resident Assistant, but today I am here in my capacity as the Assistant Secretary of the Rowan University Chapter of the NAACP.

My community is largely made up of African American families whose families just continued building, and many of these African Americans are enrolled in the public school system. Many of the families that live in East Orange are unable to afford to send their children to private schools due to economic barriers, so they enroll their children into free public schools.

My community is bordered by Newark to the east, Orange to the west, and highway 280 to the north. East Orange is near Branch Brook Park, and close proximity to Eagle Rock Reservation.

My community includes East Orange Campus High Schools, East Orange Stem Academy, Sojourner Truth Middle School, and Main Street in Orange, NJ. My community is split between the 10th and 11th Congressional districts and is in the 34th Legislative district.

Some of the issues that are most important to us are gun violence and access to healthy foods in East Orange. In the media, we see gun violence happening on a daily basis. Everyday, we hear about shots fired incidents and there are no arrests being made, only open investigations. We would like the county officials and government officials to collaborate to effectively decrease gun violence and provide resources directly in the community to combat gun violence. In terms of access to healthy foods, we only have one whole foods in our area, which is expensive and creates a financial barrier. If the elected officials would advocate for the decrease in the amount of fast food restaurants in East Orange and more healthy, yet affordable food places in East Orange, we can decrease the rates of obesity, high blood pressure, and all these other chronic health diseases that are in East Orange.

My community is a lot like Newark, another urban community in the area that has gun violence and limited access to healthy food places. We see places like Millburn, West Orange, Verona, and other communities who do not face similar problems.

To sum this all up, the greater East Orange area is a tight-knit community with deep roots in the area, and we hope to be well represented in the new district maps.

To quote the NAACP Legal Defense Fund:

Achieving equal representation and being able to cast equal and effective votes depends in part on redistricting /reapportionment maps that are drawn fairly to reflect and respect our communities. Achieving equal representation and being able to cast equal and effective votes

depends in part on redistricting and reapportionment maps that are drawn fairly to reflect and respect our communities. Therefore I ask that you take my testimony and that of my peers into consideration when drawing the map.

I thank the Committee for listening to me today and ask that you consider keeping my community together when drawing new maps to the extent it is possible, without in any way diluting minority voting power or otherwise violating the law or fair redistricting principles.

Again, thank you and it was a pleasure speaking with you all.

My Testimony

Good afternoon, my name is Amy Winkler. I live in Fanwood Borough in Union County, part of the 22nd district, where I have resided for more than 20 years. I am here to testify about some important features of my community and to request that districts be drawn to give voice to the growing populations of people of color in NJ.

Fanwood is roughly a square mile in size and surrounded on three sides by Scotch Plains Township. The two municipalities share a school district and, in many ways, we see ourselves as one large community. Lots of the people in our community grew up here and chose to buy homes and raise their own families here. Other people moved to our community because of the schools. Locally, we typically refer to the community as SPF (for Scotch Plains-Fanwood).

While still predominantly white, like much of NJ we've seen growth in the population of people of color in our community. We have a rich diversity of populations here and we take pride in that diversity. We have two historically Black neighborhoods, as well as a historically strong Italian community here. In recent years we have seen growth in our Latino, East Asian, and particularly South Asian populations. We are home to Shady Rest, the first Black country club in the United States, which was established in 1921 and was listed in the Negro Motorist Green Book. We are also home to the late Malcolm E. Nettingham, one of the original five Tuskegee Airmen, who lived most of his life here and for whom one of our middle schools was recently renamed.

Our community is in some ways a lot like Westfield, the municipality immediately east of us. We are similar in socioeconomic ways and many of the people from SPF shop, attend religious services, and socialize with friends in Westfield. Both communities are known for their schools.

To our west is the city of Plainfield. While our racial and socioeconomic makeup is different from Plainfield, increasingly businesses and friendships draw people across the border in both directions.

Now that the state's population is nearly 50% people of color and growing, it's critically important that NJ's districts be drawn so that people of color have the opportunity to pick their chosen representatives for at least half the seats.

To sum this up, it is important that we keep Scotch Plains and Fanwood together in the same district since we really do see ourselves as one community. I ask that the Commission consider a map that is reflective of the population shifts we've seen in the last decade and gives voice to the growing populations in NJ. I also ask that the Commission make their proposed maps available to the public and hold hearings providing the public the opportunity to weigh in before a final vote on certification is held.

I want to thank the Commission for holding at least 10 public hearings on this and for allowing me to share my testimony today.

Dear Members of the Redistricting Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Legislative Redistricting in New Jersey.

I am writing you as a recent candidate in a district that is politically lopsided to advocate for fairer maps on the basis that representation can suffer when the people don't have fair races and qualified, competitive candidates from whom to choose on their ballots.

While it is true that voters of a particular affiliation are often geographically congregated and the task of drawing fair, consolidated districts becomes difficult accordingly, I am hopeful that the final district maps you approve will reflect a best-case effort to resolve differences and create fair districts for healthy competition. Attached please find one example of a potential map that might be fairer for North Jersey than the district maps we have now.

Voters should be able to expect representation, accessibility, district advocacy and accountability from their representatives. During election campaigns, they should have the opportunity to hear the incumbents and the challengers speak, to hear an exchange of views in debate, and to make up their minds about who better represents their views and their needs from a place of gathered knowledge. They should have representatives who realize that their likelihood to keep their seats is directly tied to their willingness to do the work of the elected role. This is not what we have in District 26. I ran for office in my district in 2021, and my opponent was so unconcerned by the challenge and disinclined to participate in his own district race in 2021 that he focused his political activities in other areas and on advancing his own personal political ambitions, refusing to debate or engage. Sadly, there were also no Election Day consequences for this. He won the seat back, as the district was drawn to prearrange. Thus, the open issues in the district that need state attention will continue to go unresolved as they have. There can be real and financial consequences to static representation.

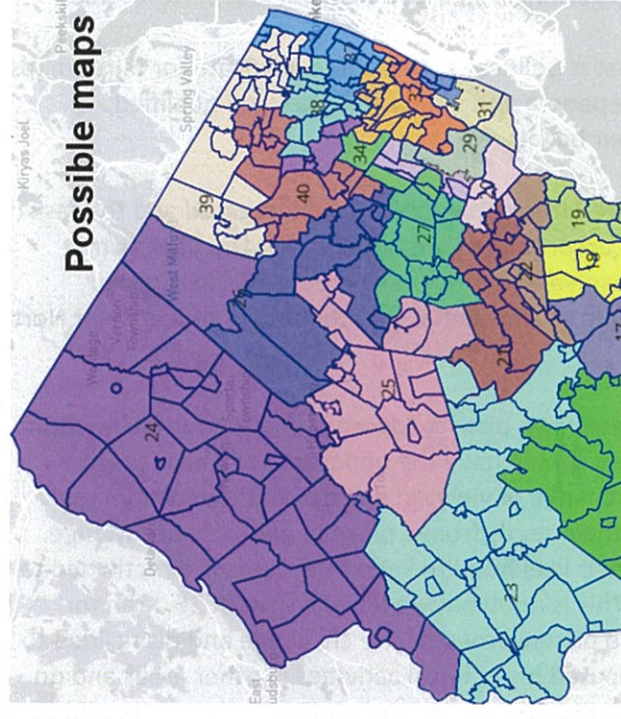
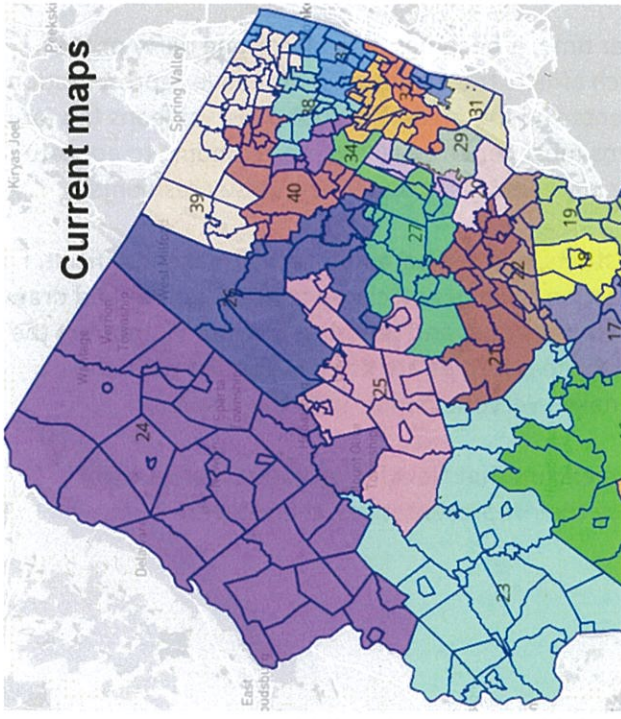
In districts in which such conditions are the case, over time, it becomes difficult for one party or the other to solicit qualified candidates to run at all, which affects the quality of prospective representation. When a contest is discounted in advance by incumbents and the media because a district leans too far in one political direction, the challengers and their teams must generate all the more funding to educate voters. That isn't easy, and makes political candidacy inaccessible for many New Jersey residents.

I appreciate the enormity of the task of redrawing districts, and the parameters that make it difficult. I understand that the inability to split towns, the inclination to keep associated towns together and draw concise districts, the concerns over equity in district composition, and for those to whom it matters the continuity of representation all matter. I understand those priorities are often in conflict with one another. I appreciate that it is nearly impossible to 'make everyone happy' with the results.

However you end up drawing the district lines, please ensure that New Jersey voters have a fairer chance to decide whether they should keep or replace their representatives, themselves.

Thank you.

Kind regards,
Christine Clarke
Former State Senate candidate, New Jersey District 26



LD	County	Municipality	Population	Registered	Original District	Move to District
LD 21	Morris	Chatham Borough	9212	7149	21	27
LD 21	Somerset	Far Hills Borough	924	880	21	23
LD 23	Warren	Hackettstown Town	10248	6697	23	24
LD 23	Warren	Harmony Township	2503	2157	23	24
LD 24	Morris	Mt. Olive Township	28886	21975	24	25
LD 24	Warren	Oxford Township	2514	1,827	24	23
LD 25	Morris	Dover Town	18460	8962	25	26
LD 25	Morris	Mt. Arlington Borough	5909	5017	25	24
LD 25	Somerset	Bernardsville Borough	7893	6835	25	23
LD 26	Morris	Butler Borough	8047	5849	26	39
LD 26	Passaic	West Milford Township	24862	20635	26	24
LD 27	Essex	Caldwell	9027	6382	27	26
LD 27	Essex	Essex Fells	2244	2143	27	26
LD 27	Morris	Harding Township	3871	3906	27	25
LD 39	Bergen	Saddle River Borough	3372	3149	39	40

	Target Pop	Population	+/- Pop	Registered Voters
LD 21	220,000	223,138	3,138	168,896
LD 23	220,000	220,811	811	166,188
LD 24	220,000	223,127	3,127	182,076
LD 25	220,000	221,538	1,538	178,054
LD 26	220,000	221,406	1,406	168,458
LD 27	220,000	227,849	7,849	183,425
LD 39	220,000	222,669	2,669	177,462
LD 40	220,000	221,725	1,725	173,774

January 8, 2022

Dear New Jersey Appointment Commission,

My name is Cyria Olingou. I live in Gloucester Township, specifically in the Sicklerville, NJ area. I am here to testify about the important features of my community and ask that the district lines in neighboring communities be redrawn. My town is made up of mostly middle-class families. My town is fairly diverse, with the education level of adults I know ranging from a high school diploma to a bachelor's or master's degree. Most of the families living here make about anywhere from \$60,000 to \$150,000 per year. Many people who live in my town were either born in New Jersey in a neighboring area or moved from a large city to my town. My community is currently bordered by Hickstown road, however, this delineation excludes Pine Hill from my community when it comes to districts. People who live in Pine Hill are as much a part of my community, as are those who live in Clementon. Individuals in Pine Hill (district 8), oftentimes receive medical care in my district (district 4). Therefore, the district map should be redrawn, so that Pine Hill can be included in our district. In addition to receiving medical care, members of my community who live in Pine Hill also shop for food, clothing, and other items or services in my district. Because of this, I am asking for Pine Hill to be included within the district where they spend their money. Pine Hill should have a say in my district because they are a part of my community. To sum this all up, Pine Hill should be a part of state district 4. I want to thank the commission for listening to my thoughts on this topic.

Sincerely,

Cyria Olingou