
Commission Meeting

of

NEW JERSEY LEGISLATIVE APPORTIONMENT COMMISSION

*“The Commission will take oral testimony from members of the public
on the establishment of State legislative districts in New Jersey”*

LOCATION: Meeting via Zoom

DATE: January 26, 2022
6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMISSION PRESENT:

LeRoy J. Jones, Jr., Democratic Delegation Chair
Al Barlas, Republican Delegation Chair
Senator Thomas H. Kean, Jr.
Senator Jon M. Bramnick
Honorable Philip S. Carchman
Cosmo A. Cirillo, Ph.D.
Linda DuBois
Michael B. Lavery, Esq.
Laura Matos
Gary Taffet
Diane T. Testa, Esq.



ALSO PRESENT:

Raysa Martinez Kruger
Office of Legislative Services
Commission Secretary

Jessica Oestreicher
Roshard Williams
Office of Legislative Services
Commission Aides

*This transcript was prepared using an outside recording not designed for transcription purposes.
Therefore, portions of this transcript may not be completely accurate as portions were inaudible and/or indiscernible.*

Meeting Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey

DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS

LeRoy J. Jones, Jr.
Chairman

Cosmo A. Cirillo
Stephen M. Sweeney
Gary Taffet
Diane T. Testa



REPUBLICAN MEMBERS

Al Barlas
Chairman

Jon M. Bramnick
Linda DuBois
Thomas H. Kean, Jr.
Michael B. Lavery

NEW JERSEY LEGISLATIVE
APPORTIONMENT COMMISSION

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APPOINTED
ELEVENTH MEMBER
Philip S. Carchman

COMMISSION NOTICE

TO: MEMBERS OF THE APPORTIONMENT COMMISSION

FROM: AL BARLAS, CHAIRMAN
LEROY J. JONES, JR., CHAIRMAN

SUBJECT: COMMISSION MEETING - JANUARY 26, 2022

The public may address comments and questions to Raysa Martinez Kruger, Commission Secretary or make scheduling inquiries to Sophie Love, Secretary, at (609)847-3890. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the Commission by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.

The Apportionment Commission will meet remotely via Zoom on Wednesday, January 26, 2022 at 6:00 PM.

The Commission will take oral testimony from members of the public on the establishment of State legislative districts in New Jersey. As required by the New Jersey Constitution, the Apportionment Commission is charged with redrawing the lines of the State's 40 legislative districts, from which the 40 Senators and 80 Members of the General Assembly are elected.

Members of the public may view the live proceedings via the New Jersey Legislature home page at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/> or via the Commission's home page at <https://www.apportionmentcommission.org/default.asp>.

Those wishing to testify must register online in advance of the meeting at <https://www.apportionmentcommission.org/schedule.asp>. Registration is also available at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>. Select January 26 on the calendar and click on Apportionment Commission for the registration link. Registrations must be received by Tuesday, January 25, 2022 at 3:00 PM. Upon successful registration, you will view a printable receipt on screen. At a later date, you will receive an email with instructions for testifying.

(OVER)

To ensure that all who wish to testify can do so, the Chair will limit public testimony to 5 minutes per person. Extra time will be allotted for those needing the assistance of a translator.

If you require language interpretation services to testify, please contact the Office of Legislative Services at (609) 847-3890 to discuss and arrange for interpretation services in advance of the meeting.

You may also submit written testimony instead of, or in addition to, oral testimony by email to OLSaideAPPC@njleg.org by Tuesday, January 25, 2022 at 3:00 PM. Written testimony will be included in the Commission's record and distributed to all Commission members.

Issued 1/19/22

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LeROY J. JONES, JR. (Democratic Delegation Chair):

Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Do you want to do a roll call?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Commissioner Testa.

MS. TESTA: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Taffet.

MR. TAFFET: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Matos.

MS. MATOS: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Lavery.

MR. LAVERY: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner DuBois.

MS. DuBOIS: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Cirillo.

MR. CIRILLO: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Bramnick.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Co-Chair Jones.

MR. JONES: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Co-Chair Barlas.

AL BARLAS (Republican Delegation Chair): Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: And 11th member
Carchman.

JUDGE CARCHMAN: Present.

MR. JONES: Madam Secretary, through you to Chairman Barlas and to Judge Carchman, I have a brief statement that I would like to read into the record before we get started with the testimonies. Is that all right with you, gentleman?

MR. BARLAS: Sure thing.

MR. JONES: Thank you.

And good evening, everyone. As I'm sure you've heard and read over the last hours, in my capacity as Chair of the New Jersey Democratic Party, I have decided to make a change in the Commissioners of the Democratic Delegation to the Apportionment Commission by appointing Laura Matos as a Commissioner.

This decision comes as a result of careful consideration with much deliberation, and in concert with a number of other party leaders across the State. As Chair of the State Democratic Committee, it is my responsibility and it is my duty to select standard bearers who best represent the Democratic Party's interest on this Commission, and ensure a strong and representative party moving forward.

No person or organization's own goals and ambitions are above the interest of our party, and the people of this State. It is in that spirit, and in reflection on the input that this Commission has received, that I have exercised my authority to make the change to the Democratic Delegation. This decision was necessary to protect the future of the Democratic Party and the goal of achieving a fair map, and the integrity of the Commission as a whole.

This decision is consistent with the evaluative standards that Judge Carchman laid out last week; specifically his acknowledgement

that we must take into account the changes that have shaped New Jersey over the past 10 years -- including population shifts and a more diverse state.

So I am proud to say that we are continuing to move beyond backroom deals, political bargaining chips, and we are listening to the many voices in this State begging for representation -- some of whom have even testified about this issue before this Commission.

In appointing Laura Matos earlier today, our Party is taking a critically important step to make sure that the same fairnesses continue to be present in the decisions made as this Commission works on a new legislative map over these next weeks. Our Democratic Party is not defined by one individual or one single entity. It is defined by our ideals, and our actions.

Now, to be clear: I am many things, but naïve is not one of them. I took this important step with the full recognition and understanding of the potential backlash from powerful constituencies, both in New Jersey and from other states, that may consider their own political fortunes to be negatively impacted. That very consideration shows the importance and the necessity for a new member.

This process is simply too important for the focus to be anywhere but on the over 9,000,000 people who will have their day-to-day lives impacted by what we do here over these next weeks. New Jersey residents deserve better.

As a former Freeholder, a former Assemblyman, as well as a former City Administrator in East Orange, I know firsthand the direct and far-reaching consequences this process will have on the 565 towns throughout the 40 legislative districts of our great state. Legislative representation

impacts everything, from aid delivered to communities and education decisions for our children, to those who will be nominated to serve in our courts of law.

Each of those things is more important than any threat of political consequence, and there is a precedent in our state for removing Commission members after appointment. Many here will recall that 10 years ago, the then-Mayor of Orange, Eldridge Hawkins, Jr., was removed from the Congressional Redistricting Committee after he had already been appointed.

So in summation, the Constitution authorizes each Party Chair to select five members to sit on the Apportionment Commission to represent the party's interest. Those individuals serve at the pleasure of their respective Chairs. Now, I want it to be understood that I take my constitutional responsibilities seriously, and it is because of this that I've made this decision. I want to assure the public that our process will continue this evening unabated, because our strength is in our diversity. Our strength is in our inclusiveness. And our strength is in our unity. And the change we are moving forward with will reflect all of those traits.

It is with that that I would like to welcome Laura Matos to the Commission, and begin tonight's meeting.

Thank you for your indulgence, ladies and gentleman, and the Chair will recognize for brief comments one of our Commissioners on the Democratic side, Diana Testa.

MS. TESTA: Thank you, Chairman.

I would like to make a point of personal privilege. Chairman Jones, I agree that as Chairman you have the sole authority under the statute to make appointments to this Committee. I look forward to

continuing to work with you to create a map that fairly represents the residents of the State of New Jersey.

I would like to welcome Laura. It's wonderful to have another woman on this Committee, and I look forward to working with her and the other Commissioners, again, to provide to a map that is fair to all of the residents of New Jersey.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Cirillo.

MR. CIRILLO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to join my colleague in welcoming Laura to the great work that this Commission is charged with. I want to also take this opportunity to personally thank you, not only as Chairman of our State Democratic Party, but also as Co-Chair of this Commission, for your continued leadership in moving us through this process, and I have no doubt that you have the best interest of this Commission and the State at heart.

So I want to take this opportunity to thank you. Welcome, Laura, to the Commission. I look forward to working with Laura, as well as all of the Commissioners, as we move forward in this process and ensure that we represent the great residents of the State of New Jersey to the best extent possible.

So, thank you, and I look forward to tonight's hearing.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Taffet.

MR. TAFFET: Chairman, thank you.

I too want to state that I am supporting your decision and your articulation thereof this evening. Consistent with our Constitution, you are the sole appointing authority for Democrats to the Apportionment Commission, and I totally respect that.

I also want to recognize and welcome Laura, Laura Matos, to this Commission. I'm looking forward to her skill set, the diversity that she brings to the perspective, and vast knowledge that she has, to the Commission.

Also, I'm looking forward to this Commission moving forward with all of its work in the weeks ahead on behalf of the State of New Jersey.

Thank you, Chairman.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Commissioner.

And Commissioner Matos.

MS. MATOS: Thank you, thank you Chairman Jones and Commissioners. I truly appreciate the confidence you have placed in me with this appointment, and I am very grateful for your leadership.

As a woman who grew up in Burlington County and lived in different parts of the state, I hope to bring my unique perspective on life in New Jersey to the Commission's very important work.

All of New Jersey's communities should be represented in the Redistricting process. With our state's Latino population growing to almost 21 percent in the latest census, I and many others from the Latino community have been paying close attention to the Apportionment process from the very beginning.

I've already hit the ground running, and I look forward to working with Judge Carchman, Chair Barlas, my fellow Commissioners, and the staff in service to the residents of our state. I am honored to be asked to serve with all of you, and while I know there is an incredible amount of important work ahead, I appreciate you all allowing me this moment to introduce myself, and I truly look forward to hearing from the public this evening.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Commissioner Matos, and welcome.

Commissioner Barlas and Commissioner Carchman, I am going to move ahead if there are no comments.

MR. BARLAS: I'm here.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman; thank you, Judge.

Madam Secretary, we are going to start with Mr. Haque.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The first speaker will be Mr. AFM Haque, followed by Mayor Andre Sayegh.

A F M H A Q U E: Good evening, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak tonight.

My name is AFM Haque, and I live in Plainsboro. I am addressing this Committee today to give reasons why Plainsboro should be kept in a substantially similar 14th Legislative District.

Since 1981, over 40 years, Hamilton, Plainsboro, and Cranbury have been the anchors of the 14th District. They have, in effect,

become communities of interest, as stated in the Redistricting Standards, because they have shared economic, environmental, and other interests over the years.

Plainsboro has been very close to Mercer County, having shared a school district with West Windsor since 1969. Cranbury has sent its children to Princeton High School in Mercer County since 1988. There have been many Plainsboro and Hamilton candidates of both parties who have run for the Legislature for 40 years. Many have been successful. Hamilton has been represented by three Plainsboro residents, including two women of both parties, for over 30 years. Plainsboro has been one of the most politically active towns in the 14th for 40 years, including fielding multiple Assembly candidates in the 1980's.

On the issue of trying to create a new Asian district, the 14th is now 18.7 percent Asian. Most of the towns in the 14th are increasing in Asian population, and that will only continue. Robbinsville now has 28 percent Asian; East Windsor 23 percent; Monroe 27 percent; Plainsboro 57 percent; and Cranbury has 21 percent. We are a district where Asians can successfully compete for political office.

In addition, we have an excellent farm team of minorities, especially Asian, coming up through the ranks. Plainsboro has Councilman Nuran Nabi, Cranbury has Councilwoman Eman El-Badawi, Monroe has Rupa Siegel, and there are minority groups on both the Mercer and Middlesex Board of Commissioners. At least nine schoolboard members in our area are Asian.

If Plainsboro is removed from this District, we are likely to lose our ability to continue this trend, and 40 years of progress will disappear.

I thank you, this Commission, for listening to me tonight.
Thanks very much.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. Haque. We appreciate your comments and your testimony, and we will certainly evaluate that as we move forward with these deliberations.

Thank you so much.

MR. HAQUE: Thank you, sir, thank you very, very much.

MR. JONES: Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Mayor Andre Sayegh, followed by Mr. Peter Chen.

MAYOR ANDRE SAYEGH: Good evening; Andre Sayegh, proud Mayor of New Jersey's most diverse city. And also, according to the 2020 Census, New Jersey's newest first-class city.

I also want to start off by commending you, Chairman Jones, for having the wisdom to further diversify this Commission and appointing Laura Matos to it. And also to congratulate Laura -- her and her husband, we share the same favorite baseball team, along with Gary Taffet. We are unabashed, long-suffering loyal Mets fans. You gotta believe.

But we in Paterson took the census very seriously. We are historically undercounted, and there are many communities in Paterson that have been chronically undercounted. We want to make sure that when you've redrawn these legislative district lines, that you take that into consideration -- that everyone counts because that was our theme, "Paterson Counts." And in spite of the pandemic, we still found a way to increase participation with the survey and to see more of an accurate number.

When I say we are New Jersey's most diverse city, I say that with pride. We have one of the largest Palestinian populations in the state; Rania Mustafa and my friends at the Palestinian American Community Center, so Abed Awad said earlier. We have one of the largest Peruvian populations, one of the largest Turkish populations, Jamaican, Haitian -- you name it, we have it. Come to Paterson if you want something good to eat or you want to see me at City Hall with the wood panels in the back of my office. But also, we saw an increase in our Hispanic population; now we're over 60 percent.

And that helps businesses, as well -- to make sure that you have an accurate count -- so they can get a proper allocation of resources. We really labored hard to make sure that we got a complete and accurate count. Peter Chen, I want to thank you for your efforts in our City.

So it would be a proper tribute to all the partners that made this possible -- because one of the first things I did when I got into office four years ago was to create a complete count committee, because we knew what the consequences would be if we weren't able to capture the exact number of people who are in Paterson. But we still have our work cut out for us in 2030. In fact, I always tell people I took -- my wife and I took the Census so seriously that between the last census and this one, we had three children so we could contribute to the population growth in Paterson.

But on a very serious note, I want to say that we have to make sure that those that have been undercounted -- and this has happened in New Jersey, one of the most diverse states in the union -- we have to make sure that everything is done within your power, that every individual is counted when you redraw the legislative lines.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you Mayor Sayegh, it's always a pleasure to see you, and thank you for your contributions to last year's Census count. We look forward to you continuing to add to the census count, even in your own household.

MR. SAYEGH: No, no more, I'm done; I'm retired, that's it. I'm sending my kids to Seton Hall like the two of us. Go Pirates.
(laughter)

MR. JONES: All right, thank you, my friend.

MR. SAYEGH: Thank you.

MR. JONES: Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Peter Chen, followed by Sue Altman.

P E T E R C H E N: Good evening, Commissioners, and Chairs; thank you so much for allowing me to speak today.

I wanted to echo the Mayor's comments about the importance of the census, and relay-- I am Senior Policy Analyst at New Jersey Policy Perspective, but before this I was at Advocates for Children of New Jersey, where I worked as Coordinator for the statewide 2020 Census, coordinating efforts with nonprofits, and municipalities, and everyone across the state to get folks counted.

And what we saw from that data is that New Jersey is more diverse than ever. But we're also seeing, I think, some important trends that I wanted to flag for the Commission in considering what diversity really looks like here in New Jersey. So I wanted to-- I have three main points.

The first is the overall increase in diversity. And, you know, this has been noted, where particularly among Hispanic, Latinx, and Asian or Asian-American communities -- these two groups account for almost all of -- more than the overall growth during the past decade. And there are currently -- the median legislative district is 57 percent non-Hispanic white; the state as a whole is now only 52 percent non-Hispanic white. So, you know, a new map should really ensure the districts, broadly speaking, reflect New Jersey's diversity; but also ensure that racial and ethnic communities of interest are not split in ways that dilute their voice.

The second point, though, is really about differentiation within categories. And I want to be clear that these populations are largely categorized as a matter of convenience for the census, for counting. Asia is a continent of four billion people, but on the census it's just one group, right? And within Asia there are lots of different national origin groups, each of which may have distinct interests of their own and may be spread out in different ways. So it's really important to consider each of these populations on their own. Asian Indian is the largest group, about 350,000; but there are groups such as the Filipino community, the Korean community, the Pakistani community, each of which have independent -- that may have independent community ties that are important to consider.

And particularly among Hispanic and Latinx communities, there's a large split between those who are U.S. born and foreign born among different groups, depending on which wave of immigration they came in with. But I do want to note that even some of these smaller national origin groups are large on their own. The Ecuadorian population in New Jersey is 123,000 residents. That would be enough to be New Jersey's sixth-largest

municipality if it were its own city. So I think it's important to consider these national origin groups, not simply the four basic categories of white only, Black/African-American only, Asian/Asian-American only, and Hispanic. And these were the only four categories that were included in the shapefiles in the 2012 Apportionment Commission's final shapefiles.

The last thing I wanted to flag -- I know I'm out of time -- is the two groups, "Some Other Race" and "More Than One Race." These are the fastest-growing racial categories in New Jersey. Some Other Race was 11.2 percent of New Jerseyans, and More Than One Race is 9.7 percent. If those two groups were combined, they would be the second-largest racial group in New Jersey. And it's important to really dig into these categories, rather than simply look at them as alone categories. I think there are real risks in only looking at the alone categories when considering the number of folks who are in these additional ones.

I have written testimony, which I'll send along. So thanks very much; sorry I talk real fast.

MR. JONES: That's okay, Mr. Chen, thank you so much.

And I have been witness to some of your writings and this testimony is going to be-- It's compelling, and it will be value added as we continue our deliberations.

So thank you so much, and thank you for the written testimony as well.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Sue Altman, followed by Abed Awad.

S U S A N A L T M A N: Hi everyone, this is Sue Altman from New Jersey Working Families. I represent an organization that is a statewide organization of labor unions, advocacy groups, and grassroots groups.

I am very, very delighted to be here tonight with you all. There's a lot of speakers, so I'm going to be very brief. I think we have a lot of Latino and Latina people who are going to have a lot to say, I think, about this incredible step forward for New Jersey's representation. I know we have a lot of South Jersey residents on tonight who will also talk about what representation means for the region of South Jersey, and how critical that is.

But I want to take my second to applaud and be so impressed by the courage and the fortitude shown by the Chairman, by the Commission. It is not easy, I have no doubt, to make a switch at this point in time when you have somebody who has historically held so much power in New Jersey. But it really does show that the current State Party leadership is committed to a future of the Party that represents all people of this State; and that's a breath of fresh air, that's a representation win for us all that really sets us up for a wonderful, and fair, and competitive next 10 years. And it makes me very hopeful for the state of our Party, for the state of New Jersey, and for the state of our country -- because these are the exact issues that we're dealing with all over the country.

So I really, truly applaud Chairman Jones, the Apportionment Committee, and it says to me that we have this country -- because once again New Jersey is leading the way in representation and what it means to be a member of the Democratic Party.

So cheers, congratulations, and I look forward to this Redistricting process, and listening to the rest of the wonderful testimonies tonight.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Ms. Altman, and always a pleasure to see you. And I appreciate those comments.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Abed Awad, followed by Keith Benson.

A B E D A W A D: Good evening, Chairman; thank you very much for the opportunity to be before this Commission. And thank you to every member of the Commission, to give the opportunity to this diverse group of speakers to hopefully deliver the voice of the diversity of New Jersey to be reflected in our districts.

My name is Abed Awad, I am an attorney in Northern New Jersey. I taught at Rutgers Law School for 17 years. I am very engrained in this State: I was born here, my three children were born here and raised here, I live in Wayne, New Jersey. I am a community leader within the Arab American and Muslim American community. I am on the National Board of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, the largest Arab American civil rights group in the country. And I am extremely proud to say that I am active with the Palestinian American Community Center in Passaic County and statewide. So I am here in my capacity as a kid from New Jersey who wants to see New Jersey democracy represent all involved in this great state.

In the areas where I reside -- my extended family lives in Middlesex County -- the Arab American community is very active and alive, and concentrated in New Brunswick, Piscataway, South River, East Brunswick, Old Bridge, Edison, and Sayreville. Our community has been coming to New Jersey since the 1800s, and we are slowly starting to be heard. It is very unfortunate to be suppressed and our voices not heard, and we are not part of the decision making process that involves all of us, and impacts all New Jerseyans.

But the community has increased multiple fold in the past 30 years. The city (*sic*) of Prospect Park, for example, has five elected officials that are Arab American -- including the Mayor, Mohamed Khairullah, and the Chief of Police, Ammen Matari. The City of Paterson -- you just heard from the great Mayor Andre Sayegh, is of Arab descent. The City of Clifton has two Board of Education members; the city (*sic*) of Haledon has two Arab Americans elected Council. North Haledon has elected Arab American officials, including Mayor Randy George. There are currently 13 additional cities in New Jersey with 14 elected officials of Arab American heritage.

But we don't have any representation in Trenton, and we don't have representation or a voice in Washington D.C. We will provide you with an extended list of our Arab American elected officials. Also, the community is pretty-- Surprisingly, in the past 10 or 15 years, the community in Gloucester County has increased -- whether it's in Deptford or New Bedford, Sewell, and Gloucester Township and Glassboro.

The one major issue is we are not identified as a racial or ethnic category in the census. So therefore, we're lumped with white people. We're not white. My son, until he was in third, fourth grade, thought he was

Black, and he has to answer white on his census now when he's already an adult. So this has really basically watered down our ability to be represented in democratic politics in this state.

So this demographic data is a defect -- a structural defect that actually suppresses the voices of New Jerseyans. So we hope that you take into account that our community is large, and the redistricting maps that the Palestinian American Community Center has put together-- We're submitting a community-of-interest map highlighting over 60 cities and townships in 10 counties with significant Arab American populations.

Please, if you want New Jersey's democracy to work, all voices have to be at the table. It's not about suppression, it's not about political influences for one group over the other. We are strong when all our voices are heard.

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity this evening.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much. I mean, that was truly compelling, eye-opening, passionate; and I think I speak on behalf of the entire Commission -- both sides, and our independent member -- that that information is not going to escape the process on which we are about to embark on.

Your testimony was dead on, it was eye-opening, and it was value added to what we embrace in this country -- and that is fairness, real diversity, and the essence of our democracy.

Thank you so much.

MR. AWAD: Thank you very much, Chairman.

Thank you very much, Commission.

MR. JONES: Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Keith Benson, followed by Anthony Talerico.

KEITH BENSON: How are you? My name is Keith Benson. And I want to say Camden, New Jersey, is happy and supports you, brother Jones, for the bold move that you have taken.

My name is Keith Benson, I am the Director of Camden Leadership Initiative, and I am also a Senior Fellow at Harvard University. Harvard brought me there because of the work that I have done in Camden, my organization, and we want you to know that you have friends in Camden who look to work with you at the level that you're working at, because we see fairness and honesty coming back to our political process, and we could not be happier.

There is a revolution of joy in this City, and we want to thank you, let you know you have friends, and offer our support to you and say keep it going, we got you.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Mr. Benson, I appreciate that.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Mr. Anthony Talerico, followed by Christopher Binetti.

ANTHONY TALERICO, JR.: Thank you; good evening everyone. My name is Anthony Talerico, Jr. I am the Mayor of the Borough of Eatontown.

I certainly appreciate the comments regarding representation. Not that I disagree with them in any way, but I am choosing

tonight to speak about some redevelopment issues that I face in my area. I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight at this Commission.

I would like to request that Eatontown continue to be part of the same district as Tinton Falls. The borough of Tinton Falls and the Borough of Eatontown have common interests regarding the same high school district, our recreation and sports programs, and teams, and that is one area. But also, I'd like to focus on something that you may not be aware of. Fort Monmouth, a military base containing 1,200 acres, was closed and the boroughs of Tinton Falls, Eatontown, and Oceanport are in the middle of redeveloping that through partnership with the EDA. And so it makes sense to me that these three communities have the same legislative district.

In particular, I'd like to focus on Eatontown and Oceanport. You may be aware a 292 acre mega parcel was put out to the public, and is attracting a lot of interest -- where else can you bid on 292 acres of land in New Jersey? And you can imagine the State of New Jersey is going to be spending probably close to the next 10 years redeveloping that property. And it would make sense to me, as a voting member of FMERA, that is deciding on this property, to have commonality and common leadership spanning these three municipalities -- Tinton Falls, Eatontown, and Oceanport.

Also, with regard to redevelopment, the Borough of Eatontown has the Monmouth Mall, which I believe at one time was the sixth largest mall in the entire country. We just declared that an area in need of redevelopment. The Borough is looking to develop that area -- it is quite stagnant now; and along the state highways, State Highway Route 35, there

is development from that site through Ocean Township, where they are also seeing a lot of development along the highway corridor.

So, again, not to take away from any of the other items that are certainly worthy of your time and consideration, I would just respectfully request this Commission consider a corridor along State Route 35 adjoining with their legislative districts; and also the three towns that make up Fort Monmouth, namely Tinton Falls, Eatontown, and Oceanport, to be joined together.

And I thank you for your time.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. Talerico.

MR. TALERICO: Thank you, sir.

MR. JONES: Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Christopher Binetti, followed by Leslie Bockol.

MR. JONES: Mr. Binetti.

CHRISTOPHER BINETTI, PhD.: My name is Dr. Christopher Binetti. I am the President of the Italian American Movement. I am probably the only Italian American civil rights activist testifying today -- I usually am.

And I recently found out that my State Senator is no longer willing to represent me anymore. My right to representation has been terminated because I have a suit against the State for ethnic discrimination against Italians. And even when I offered to drop the suit in order to get my representation back, he won't do it.

This is what happens to Italian Americans every day. We are constantly ignored; we are constantly being told that we are wrong or we're crazy or we just don't know when to quit. And the truth is that Italian

Americans are actually not in the same position, but in a similar position as Arab Americans, in that we're considered white on the census but we're not really white sociologically. And I have long supported Arab Americans' right to be reclassified, but I also think Italian Americans need to be reclassified -- whether in two separate groups or in a Mediterranean American group -- but the truth is that Italian Americans will continue to suffer until we are finally reclassified.

We are victims of malrepresentation in which unauthorized residents are included in the districts, reducing Italian Americans' representation. We are also generally-- Our numbers are ignored because the 2020 census does count us -- although it undercounts us -- but it didn't make that data available yet to everyone, unlike racial data. This is actually the same problem that Arab Americans have with the census data, it's actually a very similar problem. I think it's important, because I know there's a lot of sympathy, and I agree, that Arab Americans should be reclassified -- but we should be as well.

Over 15 percent of the population of New Jersey is Italian, and yet it is almost impossible to get a job as a public academic, as an Italian. It is impossible to get your legislator to talk to you. And in general, it is impossible to get any kind of Civil Rights legislation done if you're Italian.

I have been treated very poorly in the last couple years because of my ethnicity, and I found that you simply cannot be believed because you are classified as white. It is essential to not only get us the proper representation we need so that we can actually get the Civil Rights bill, but to get the Civil Rights bill done so that finally Italian Americans don't feel, as we have for a number of years, that we have to leave the state.

If we actually looked at the ethnic origins of people leaving the state for Florida, we would find that it's a disproportionate amount that are Italian. This is a serious problem with being pushed out of our home state, and yet constantly -- usually people from a more privileged ethnic background -- will talk down to me, telling me that I'm either lying or making it up, or that there's something wrong with me. And I think that until Italians, and Arab Americans, and other people who are considered white, who aren't white, count as diversity, I don't think we are ever going to be able to defeat the resistance to affirmative action. We know that the court is taking up affirmative action right now. This is a terrible travesty, and hopefully the court doesn't overturn it.

But one of the reasons is because there are key groups that are excluded from affirmative action, like Italian Americans, Arabs, Jews, and other Mediterranean Americans. So it's important for us to be included, because it will break the back of resistance to affirmative action, diversity, and equity inclusion.

Thank you very much for your time.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. Binetti.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Leslie Bockol, followed by Chrissy Buteas.

LESLIE BOCKOL: Hi, thank you. My name is Leslie Bockol, I am Co-Executive Director, along with Mara Novak, of NJ 11th for Change. Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight.

As a grassroots organization centered in Congressional District 11, our group focuses closely on the needs and the demographics of

the people living in our territory, including the formally 10 -- now 8 -- legislative districts that make up our territory. Our Field Director Stacey Abenstein and our Research Director Patricia Doherty spend countless hours analyzing the demographic data and the voting breakdowns of our changing communities.

At NJ 11th for Change, we prioritize government that's transparent, responsive, and accountable to its constituents, which we all know happens only when candidates and elected officials need to earn their seats in every election. That requires competitive districts. In addition to all the other factors I know you have to balance in the monumental task of Redistricting, NJ 11th for Change urges you to create districts that are competitive in ways that reflect the demographics and the will of their population. To do otherwise discourages voter turnout among those whose voices are chronically underrepresented.

As our state grows and changes, we need districts that don't have predetermined results based on historic power structures. I'd like to call your attention, as one example, to LD26. LD26 has been drawn in an indefensibly contorted horseshoe shape, giving one party a complete lock on elections with a whopping 7 percent voter registration advantage. A Democrat hasn't held a State legislative seat in that district since 1981. This is not good for the people of this District. State Senator Pennacchio, who has held a seat in the legislature since 2000 or 2001, is known to have literally told his constituents, "Good luck with that," crossing his arms when they confront him with a problem. And with a built-in seven-point advantage, he doesn't need to lift a finger to campaign or even debate. He doesn't need to

worry about his voters' concerns, and neither will his inevitable successors, unless the District is substantially redrawn.

It's a disservice to our current voters if districts are drawn to protect political strongholds that no longer accurately reflect and represent the people who live in them. A district drawn to be noncompetitive is a powerful disincentive for constituents to come out and vote and have their voices heard; or later have their interests represented by their legislators who are elected and sent to Trenton, ostensibly to help all the people of their district. When one party or another has a lock on the vote, they have no political incentive to advocate for constituents beyond their base, and that's a problem. It's a problem that redistricting needs to address.

So thank you again for hearing me out, and for the serious work you're doing here on this Commission.

I'd like to offer a special thanks to Laura Matos -- NJ 11th for Change is so glad to see you on this Commission; and to Chairman Jones for your important decision today.

Thanks, and goodnight.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Ms. Bockol. I appreciate your comments, and thank you for your testimony.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next is Chrissy Buteas, followed by Patricia Campos-Medina.

CHRISSEY BUTEAS: Thank you, Co-Chairs Jones and Barlas, 11th member Carchman, and all members of the New Jersey Legislative Apportionment Commission; good evening.

My name is Chrissy Buteas, I am the Executive Director of the NEW JOBS PAC. NEW JOBS is composed of businesses from every industry sector and region of New Jersey, and the PAC advocates for pro-business legislators. NEW JOBS appreciates and respects the guiding principles that Judge Carchman presented to this Commission, and towards that we felt compelled to present the business community's perspective on the task in front of you: Reapportioning New Jersey's 40 legislative districts with some of those principles in mind.

The business community can be best described as neutral on many of Judge Carchman's principles, but the key principle of competitiveness fits into the reoccurring theme for NEW JOBS. What we routinely ask legislators and what we are requesting from you today: Balance. Balance is important, both among the various guiding principles and within districts to ensure competitiveness. Judge Carchman called for harmonizing competing interests with the public interest at its core. And that public interest is competitive elections and balanced public policy, representing all sides of an issue. While the competitiveness principle should not dominate to the exclusion of Judge Carchman's other principles, NEW JOBS believes it should be prioritized to improve our democratic process.

The business community believes that competitive districts lead to competitive ideas and strong, balanced public policy. Non-competitive districts lead to a lack of healthy dialogue and discussion among our policy makers across the aisle, resulting in less thoughtful policy and choices made by inertia. To avoid leaving the state as an outlier when evaluating our state's overall economy, strong public policy making is critical

so New Jersey is better positioned to be a leader in all areas of public policy, from innovation to education to infrastructure.

The facts speak for themselves, as we are one of the most indebted states in the nation, and an outlier in many costs of doing business. Our chronic debt has continuously exacerbated our State's fiscal challenges and has often fueled our high costs. To find that better balance in the future -- where New Jersey can be pro-business on tax policy but still have adequate revenue to invest in workforce development, infrastructure, and innovation; pro-jobs on environmental policy, but still protect the environment; and pro-employer on labor mandates, but still protect workers -- we need more moderate legislators to execute those more nuanced and middle-of-the-road policies that will prevent us from being anti-business outliers.

Not surprisingly, NEW JOBS sees evidence that moderate legislators are often the ones from competitive or swing legislative districts, so we are requesting that you make more of these balanced districts that create moderate legislators. If legislators have a similar number of constituents that are concerned about affordability and controlling debt, as concerned about investing in more government programs, then we are more balanced on the appropriate use of government dollars and less likely to be an outlier on taxes.

If the constituents wanting to protect workers rights and the environment are similar to those that care about ensuring there are good-paying jobs and fewer needless mandates that other states don't have, then New Jersey is more likely to be balanced on our regulatory climate. If legislators are worried about the national and State trends impacting the voting patterns of their local legislative district and their chances to win

elections, then they will be less likely to only cater to one side or the other in policy debates.

It can be a challenge to define a competitive district, but I think it would be beneficial to make as many districts as possible more balanced. I think this Commission should have the simultaneous goals of, one, making those non-competitive districts, where legislators expect to get 65, 70, 75, 80 percent of the vote, closer to the 60 percent districts. Second, taking the districts where the victor often gets 55 to 60 percent of the vote and making them single-digit races. And keep the handful of districts that are routinely competitive, such as today's 2, 8, 11, and 16, as those districts are evidence that legislators in competitive districts have often brought more balance and moderation.

The NEW JOBS PAC, on behalf of New Jersey's business community, requests that you create a legislative district map that fosters more balanced districts and competitive races that will moderate New Jersey's policies and make our legislators more responsive to all constituents -- laudable goals for all New Jerseyans, not just the business community. It will also have a side benefit of hopefully increasing civic participation across the state, as more New Jerseyans will feel that every vote matters.

We thank you very much for considering our perspective; and as always, if you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, we really appreciate that testimony.

Madam Secretary, next witness.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Patricia Campos-Medina, followed by James Colon.

PATRICIA CAMPOS - MEDINA: Good evening, Chairman Jones and members of the Commission. My name is Patricia Campos-Medina, and today I am speaking on behalf of Latina Civic Action; I am the President of the Board.

For a state that boasts a Latino population of almost 21 percent of our state, the lack of Latino representation on this Commission was always a problem. So on behalf of the Board of Latina Civic, we are thankful that you, Chairman Leroy Jones, chose to fix this exclusion. Just like my brother from Camden stated earlier -- I didn't take his name, but I appreciate it, his joy -- we had a celebration of joy today when we learned that you had made this courageous choice to return representation to Latinos in the New Jersey redistricting process.

Laura was born and raised in Burlington County and has dedicated her professional life to public service and to elevating other women, other Latinos, other women of color, and her voice will add tremendous value to the discussion about what does it take to really have representation in redistricting.

But as I celebrated, and as joyful as we are to have her voice and have her represent this important community, we also know that redistricting is about making choices about what is the future of New Jersey, and what is the political representation that this State needs to make sure that the resources that come to New Jersey because of the census count are redistributed fairly.

New Jersey Latino growth was marked in the last count of the Census by its spatial growth. It didn't grow just in the traditional areas like, you know, Hudson County or the usual counties -- it grew especially across the middle of the state and it grew in parts of the southern part of the state. So any new redistricting map must be inclusive of the spatial growth of the population and grant Latinos some influence in more districts than we currently have.

So as we review maps that you were proposing -- and we are thankful also that you have announced that you will be sharing maps with the community for feedback -- as we look and review the maps that you propose, we will be looking for more representation spatially across the state so that Latinos can have more influence in other areas and not just the traditional areas.

This spatial representation is important for a new generation of Latino voters that are coming up and will be able to vote in the next 10 years. Latino youth comprise 20 percent -- almost 22 percent of New Jersey's school-aged children. So who represents us on school boards, and who makes decisions about resources matters to a whole generation of Latino children and Latino voters.

Latinos continue to be disproportionately affected by New Jersey's lack of affordable housing; they're trapped in segregated school districts; lack access to their basic everyday civil rights such as language access and translation imports; they lack access to healthcare. The most recent example of the impact of this structural racism in Latino communities includes that Latino men represent 43 percent of Corona Virus deaths in people under 50 years old. Latino men are working, they're essential workers,

and they died and they left a generation of mothers and children who are totally dependent on the support that we create as a community for Latina women.

Latina women need daycare, they need after-school care, they need paid family leave, they need sick days, they need good wages, and they need the support of the school systems so their children can grow and become productive citizens. Those policy decisions need to be made by representatives of the community that understands the needs of this community.

In order to achieve this goal, we need our community to have the opportunity to serve, to run for office, and win. Redistricting does not guarantee equal representation -- we understand that. It guarantees *fair* representation. And fair, of course, is arbitrary. Who decides what is fair? It's an arbitrary decision, and the people who are being impacted by decisions like this are not in the room. You will never know if the decision that you make is fair, because you don't understand how it lands on the people who are not in the room.

So as representatives on this Commission, it is important that you have leaders amongst you that understand the experience of the community that elected officials are supposed to be representing. And fair practices and fair policies come into play when districts -- legislative districts, boundaries -- are delineated by political interests. So it is the role of this Commission to extend, to raise up above political interest and focus on the democratic process and the interest of all New Jerseyans.

Every 10 years, New Jersey has an opportunity to put forward a fair and accurate redistricting effort. And we thank you for the

decisions that you make today, and also for choosing to make the maps public for feedback.

Because we had a spatial growth across the state, we would like to see a legislative map that increases the interest of Latinos in areas like Middlesex County, and Mercer County, and Somerset County, Monmouth County. We want to see South Jersey Latinos keep their influence in Camden County, in Burlington County, and expand their influence in Atlantic County. Latinos want to see their current political representation grow from less than 8 percent to double digits. We also want to return Latino representation to Bergen County. Four years ago, we lost representation in LD33. That population has grown, and representation must return to the areas that were formally included in District 33.

As Mayor Sayegh stated earlier, Passaic County has expanded its Latino representation. We would like to see representation increase in that area, too.

We are working closely with the Latino Action Network Foundation to offer our community-of-interest map that empowers our community, and increases resources to all the counties where Latinos have moved to and are not prepared to deal with the growth in population and the children there.

We look forward to reviewing the maps and offering our feedback, and we look forward to working with you to make sure that our representation increases, and we have fair and competitive maps where Latinos can run. We also look forward to making sure that we have competitive primary elections so as Latinos choose to run, they can win.

Thank you, Chairman Jones, and thank you for the courageous choice you made today to add Laura Matos to this panel.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Dr. Campos, and as always your testimony is dead on and value added, and we appreciate that.

Madam Secretary, we're going to move on to the next speaker; but can I ask if we're still working a time commitment there for each speaker, of three minutes?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

MR. JONES: I haven't seen the clock.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, there is a clock that should appear on the screen. It's a three-minute timer, and then there is a sound when the three minutes are up.

MR. JONES: Okay. Just make sure, because I don't want to -- I want to be fair to all the speakers, and some have kind of exceeded the three minutes and we want to make sure that's applied across the board.

So given that, next speaker, Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is James Colon, followed by Sara Cullinane.

JAMES COLON: Hi, yes, thank you.

I want to thank the Commission for giving me the opportunity to testify today. My name is James Colon. I've been living in Bayville, New Jersey, for over 20 years. I am here today to tell you more about my community, District 9, and advocate for a fair legislative district here in New Jersey.

District 9 is made up of parts of Atlantic, Burlington, and Ocean counties. Throughout the District we have houses of worship; with

some light public transportation, which includes a bus that takes you up and down Route 9; hospitals; various civic organizations; food pantries, etc. I mention these because New Jersey's population is growing. New Jersey's minority population rate makes up 48 percent of the state. The highlights of the fact that each of the 40 districts in New Jersey contain communities of interest.

However, no matter how big or small the communities are, there is a need for appropriate representation. The Commission has the ability to draw district lines that reflect accurate representation. We have an historic opportunity to lead the nation in diverse representation in our State Legislature. In 2010, District 9's population was 225,205 people, and in 2020 it grew to 235,501 people, indicating a 4.53 percent change. The breakdown of that growth is 21,460 Latinos, 8,379 African Americans, 250 Native Americans, and 6,414 Asian Americans. Over the last decade, the Latino population grew by 300,000 in New Jersey -- the biggest population growth of any ethnic racial group.

In District 9, Latinos saw a 52.35 percent growth in our community. Latinos are the largest minority community in New Jersey, making up 22 percent of the population, while only making up 8 percent of the legislature. As a state, we need to do better. We need to draw district boundaries in a fair and transparent process.

I will thank the Commission again for their time.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. Colon. I appreciate your comments.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Sara Cullinane, followed by Matt Dragon.

SARA CULLINANE: Thank you so much.

My name is Sara Cullinane, I am the Director of Make the Road New Jersey. We are a grassroots organization, and our mission is to build the power of immigrant and Latinx communities to achieve dignity and respect; and we do that through community organizing, legal services, transformative education, and policy innovation.

We know that the results of the 2020 Census demonstrate a rich diversity here in New Jersey, and that over the past 10 years New Jersey is growing to become a majority people of color, majority-minor state. And in particular, the Latino population in our state has grown tremendously. There are now more than 2 million residents who are Latinx; and our Asian community is also growing to approximately 1 million residents.

So on behalf of Make the Road New Jersey, as a grassroots statewide organization representing thousands of Latinx members across the state, we are thrilled to see Laura Matos appointed to the Committee, and thank Chairman Jones for this appointment. It's crucial that we have representation from every community in our state, and in particular with the rapid growth of Latinx communities across New Jersey, we're very happy to see this representation in the very body that will be making determinations about representation going forward.

So thank you so much for the opportunity to testify, and take care.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Ms. Cullinane, I appreciate your testimony.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Matt Dragon, followed by William Eames.

MR. JONES: Welcome, Mr. Dragon. Good to see you again.

MATTHEW DRAGON: Thank you; you too, Chairman.

Good evening. My name is Matt Dragon, I live in West Orange in Essex County, and I am a Co-Chair of the Essex County chapter of Our Revolution.

Thank you to the Commissioners and staff for serving on this Commission, and welcome to Commissioner Matos.

Chairman Jones, thank you for taking action today and your statement. I appreciate the focus on diversity, as you'll see reflected in my comments.

The Voting Rights Act spells out that states cannot provide protected groups, "less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice." When we look at a state as diverse as New Jersey, we need to consider how that diversity reflects through our legislative districts. According to the census, New Jersey is 21 percent Hispanic or Latino, 15 percent Black, and 10 percent Asian. And we know these groups are more likely to be undercounted.

While it's not possible to have maps that perfectly map into these demographic groups as legislative districts, any map you consider adopting should be approaching 50 percent majority-minority districts. It is probably hard for the white members of the Commission and our

predominantly white legislators to fully grasp what these communities need when they say representation matters. But as a white male voter, let me put it this way: My vote has been inflated at the expense of others ever since it was first legally defined. Its value was inflated by appropriating the power of women's votes and stealing the power of Black and brown votes. It is on that historic foundation of systemic racism -- the systemic racism that endures through to today in our current districts -- that continues to overvalue my vote.

So your role on this Commission is to devalue my vote and the votes of the people who look like me. That's not to say that you should undervalue them; this isn't about penalizing white voters, but rather to acknowledge the history. Allow yourselves to see how it is affecting New Jersey and our current map, and to rebalance the power to make sure that it is fair and equitable.

You must allow voters to reclaim their power in choosing representatives and participating in the process, and restoring power to those we have historically marginalized as a country and a state. The Apportionment process should be about ensuring fair and equitable representation for all New Jersey residents, not just those of us who have traditionally seen ourselves represented in the State House.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you very much, Mr. Dragon. Your testimony, as always, was very thought provoking.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is William Eames, followed by Celeste Fernandez.

WILLIAM EAMES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all the members of the Committee. I appreciate the time and effort that you're going to put in to try and produce a fair map for the State of New Jersey.

My name is Bill Eames, I live in Hanover Township in Morris County. I'm an activist citizen; I don't represent and I'm not paid for by a group that's trying to advocate for their particular gain.

I'm a little bit disturbed at all of the competitiveness that we've brought into this discussion. My Lord is -- I'm a Christian, my Lord made one race, and it's called human. And we all are trying, I would think, to work as one state for the benefit of all. But I hear a tremendous amount of demand and request for special interests of every sort: Male, female, Black, white, Asian, green; you know, this district, that district, small town, big town. I don't hear much talk about us as a single state that is becoming terribly uncompetitive, has tremendously damaging fiscal policies, and is really not doing a good job of serving any of its people.

So I would just argue for fairness. I understand all the criteria; I read Judge Carchman's essay. I see the immense amount of money of consultants being paid, I see the deals where certain members of the Committee agree that they will all vote as a block instead of allowing individuals to vote their conscience. I think these things are not good for a state. We cannot divide ourselves.

And the idea of competitive districts is certainly the goal. Non-competitive districts, without regard to which political party they favor, do not serve the people. They serve those who manage to have almost guaranteed elections. The folks in Downtown Newark have a very guaranteed set of districts, but they are not happy with their representation.

So I think very strongly we need to work a little bit more looking at the state as a whole and as districts, to make them all competitive. So I would simply ask and urge all of us -- let's not try and slice and dice and pull every piece of the pie for ourselves. Let's try and remember that we are all part of a state and a nation and a people that have, for many years, worked together. And certainly that ought to be our goal.

So thank you very much, and good luck in your efforts.

MR. JONES: Thank you very much for your testimony, Mr. Ames.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Celeste Fernandez, followed by Leandra Gerena.

C E L E S T E F E R N A N D E Z: I thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight; and thank you for giving a Latina an opportunity to represent us.

My name is Celeste Fernandez; I am a community leader. I am a small business owner, and also a former Democratic candidate as an Atlantic County Commissioner-at-Large. Even though we represent the Latino community, representing more than 20 percent of the Atlantic County population, we continue to be with no representation on our municipal level, and our commissions and boards, let alone on a county level.

Like I said, I am a former Democratic candidate for Commissioner-at-Large, and I have to share with you that in 2020 I was the first Latina that ran for that position. Even though I was selected in the primary, when the generals came I was separated and lost with a margin of 300 points -- or 300 votes -- against my opponent. But even though it was

an issue, with 27,000 votes we lost by 300 votes, so I requested a recount for transparency and to ensure that every vote was counted and that we protect the right to our votes.

Just to make this story short, my recount was denied even though it was a margin of 0.3% between us. So myself, with the support of the Democratic Party, had to fight for eight months to get the recount. And finally after that appeal, and some fighting, eight months later a recount was granted. And it still was not fair.

So at this point, we need a Latina representation. We need diverse representation on our board. And I attest, and I believe that Laura Matos is the person, the right person to represent us. This lady, Laura Matos, together with her team -- Patricia Campos, (indiscernible) -- have done a great job representing us, supporting us, and guiding us from North to South. Because it's not a secret that we live in a systemic racism that doesn't allow us to be in a position of power, to have a voice. Our rights have been violated so many times, but we continue fighting. We continue having faith that together we can change that for the better.

So it's not just Atlantic County that we are representing. We also have Cape May County, we have Burlington County, we have Cumberland County. These are areas where our Latino population continues growing, and growing, and growing.

So thank you, Chairman, for the opportunity. Thank you for allowing us to have a voice and representation at the table. So we continue with you and we're going to continue working together for a fair map. We need this.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Ms. Fernandez. I really appreciate your comments, and they will be duly noted.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Next speaker is Leandra Gerena, followed by Kirk Gerety.

L E A N D R A G E R E N A: Hi, good evening; my name is Leandra Gerena. I am a volunteer with Wind of the Spirit, and I live in Morristown, New Jersey.

Thank you for letting me speak tonight and to listen to all of the wonderful speakers. I agree with many of them that we want to ensure that our communities have a fair and diverse voice. Morristown and a lot of the surrounding area, such as Dover and Parsippany and Warren, have a very robust and diverse Latinx community, and we want to make sure that that community's voice is heard when thinking about the redistricting of the maps. And we work together, we socialize together, and we want to make sure that collectively our voice can be heard.

So thank you for considering this, and have a nice evening.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Ms. Gerena, we really appreciate your comments.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Kirk Gerety, followed by Francesca Giarratana.

K I R K G E R E T Y: Hi, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak here. My name is Kirk Gerety, I'm from a small community in the southern part of Atlantic County by the name of Somers Point.

Recently, I've heard that they're talking about taking us out of District 2 and placing us in District 1. This was done to us in 2001, we were put in District 1, and then in 2011 we were put back in District 2. Being put back in the District 1 again is going to cause mass confusion for the citizens of Somers Point.

And the reasons I've been given for this is that we're a contiguous city with District 1. That is not true. Somers Point is separated from District 1 by a large body of water. There are three highways that leave Somers Point and go to District 1 -- two of them, you have to pay a toll on. We are all about diversity, we are a very diverse community. We want fairness in voting. What I believe the people of Somers Point would agree with is we want stability. We want stability in our legislators, our leaders.

We have a legislative office that is one and a half miles from the center of our town right now. If we are put in District 1, that legislative office will now be 23 miles away, with no direct bus route. People who do not have transportation to get there, and have problems and need their legislative leaders to discuss their problems, would have to take a bus with multiple connections to get there -- that takes over an hour and 48 minutes on the average.

Some of the things that Somers Point has in common with the district that we're in now, District 2: We share a regional high school with our two neighboring communities; if we're put in District 1, we will now have a high school that is split into two legislative districts. We have shared services with several of our surrounding communities.

This is something that I don't think is going to benefit our representation. You look at numbers for election day, but you also look at

the fairness and representation and accessibility of that. This will detrimentally hurt the people of Somers Point. And if, from what I'm being told, one of the only alternatives to do is to move Somers Point, I would ask that once you move us, please leave us there. Leave us in a district where we can get to know our legislative leaders and be able to access them fairly.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. Gerety, good and informative testimony; I appreciate that.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Francesca Giarratana, followed by Ruben Gilgorri.

FRANCESCA GIARRATANA: Good evening, Commission; thank you so much for giving the opportunity to speak. My name is Francesca Giarratana, and I serve as the Division Chief for Hudson Division of Planning, and my office led the Hudson County outreach efforts for the 2020 Census.

The 2020 Census results showed that Hudson County had the most growth out of all the New Jersey counties and the counties in the New York City Metro area. And we owe our successful numbers in large part to the engagement of our vibrant and diverse communities. Hudson County Executive Tom Degise prioritized Census outreach from very early on, and our office had begun to mobilize back in 2017. We prioritized the importance of trusted messengers and engaging the important stakeholders in our communities, all of our municipalities, our local nonprofits, and our County working group members.

So at the end of 2019 when the State announced its financial support, we were able to hit the ground running with how to spend our funds and work with the partnership of our local nonprofits. We had hired a very diverse outreach staff -- Spanish and Arabic speakers; we had a focus on the Latino community, who is almost 50 percent of our population, by contracting with media consultants, messaging for the Spanish-speaking community. And we looked to schedule a lot of in-person meetings and have a robust social media presence. We had all of our materials prepared in several languages that exist in Hudson County, including Tagalog, Urdu, Hindu, Arabic, and Mandarin, along with English and Spanish.

And when the pandemic hit and we had to pivot, we threw our resources into virtual events, our website, social media, emails, and digital advertising. We also met the communities that we needed to reach where they were and where they needed to go during the pandemic. So, for example, we printed reusable grocery bags to provide to pantries, and nonprofits, and elected officials who were hosting food distributions. We went to COVID testing centers, and of course participated in many virtual events.

When New Jersey started to cautiously reopen, we made sure to head to community outdoor local events for the diverse communities, including holiday celebrations like the one at Liberty State Park for Juneteenth, or at a major mosque in Jersey City for the Eid al-Adha event back in August. All of the outdoor community events totaled about 115 by the end of the Census outreach effort. We had signs for local businesses, continued to coordinate with local officials, and we topped it off by hosting two sets of major events at all 12 of our municipalities -- traveling block parties that were definitely very successful.

The results of the 2020 Census outreach showed a different picture than what had happened in the past two decades -- 2000 was the first decade that we saw population growth in six decades, and it was mostly along the Hudson River. But after the 2020 Census, every single one of our Hudson County municipalities' population grew, and there were some very important quantitative facts that showed diversity was expanding to every corner of our County.

Some examples included small examples of how, around transit hub and commuter-friendly areas, Harrison and Secaucus now had a population of over 50 percent (*sic*). Bayonne's African American population and their Latino population had doubled since 2000. The Latino population in Kearny and Secaucus had doubled since 2000; and North Bergen had their share of Latino population increase, and their portion of white population, alone, decrease in 2000 (*sic*).

MR. JONES: Ms. Francesca, I think you've gone a little bit over your three minutes.

MS. GIARRATANA: Oh--

MR. JONES: Can you just summarize and make sure--

MS. GIARRATANA: Sure, absolutely; yes, my apologies.

So I would just like to say, in closing, it should be noted the diversity of Hudson County cannot be fully encapsulated by simple census questions and categories. Jersey City, arguably the most diverse city in the country, has more stories to tell than the Census did. But at the end of the day, it's important to have representation of our county and our diverse communities.

Thank you so much.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much. And we do have copies of your written testimony, that's correct, right?

MS. GIARRATANA: I do not, but I can submit it.

MR. JONES: Please do. We don't want to miss anything. Thank you so much.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Ruben Gilgorri, followed by Jack Glasser.

RUBEN GILGORRI: I'd like to start off by saying thank you to Chairman Jones and the Commissioners for allowing me the opportunity to give my personal testimony tonight.

My name is Ruben Gilgorri, and I'm from Dover, New Jersey, Morris County. I'm also one of the founding members of the Morris County Democratic Latin Caucus.

As you approach the difficult task of fairly redistricting the legislative districts, I ask you to take into consideration the impact this will make on our immigrant communities within Morris County when you make this important decision. Most of Morris County is split into two legislative districts -- LD 25 and LD 26. Moving Parsippany-Troy Hills Township from LD 26 to LD 25 would allow Morris County's growing immigrant communities, which are mostly Latino, Hispanic, and Asian, to receive proper representation. This move would also allow for fair appropriation and allocation of educational, health, and other governmental resources to better serve our growing communities.

I'll keep my testimony short tonight and brief, as you all have a lot of things to consider and weigh out as you make your decision. I

appreciate your time and consideration on behalf of all our Morris County communities.

Thank you to Chairman Jones for having the heart to make a move in appointing Laura Matos as a Commissioner.

Thank you, everyone.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Ruben, I appreciate your comments, and we will make sure that we consider those as we move forward with our deliberations.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Jack Glasser, followed by Tala Ismail.

MAYOR JACK GLASSER: Good evening, Mr. Chairman; my name is Jack Glasser. I am the Mayor of the City of Somers Point. I appreciate you allowing me to testify this evening before the Commission.

I am not going to speak that long because Mr. Gerety spoke so eloquently about Somers Point, but we are a small community -- four square miles in the Southeastern part of Atlantic County. I stand here tonight -- or sit here tonight -- and want to put on the record that I support keeping Somers Point with Legislative District 2. It's not because of those who are leading us in Legislative 1, because they have done so well in the past, and will in the future with the current legislators.

It's just that Somers Point is so much tied in with Atlantic County. Many of our residents in this working class town are employed by the casino industry, and those industries that support the casinos. As Mr. Gerety said, our students go to Mainland Regional High School, along with the students from Northfield and Linwood, and sharing that.

So our demographics pretty much are such that it's different than Cape May County, and we are more of a suburban town here. So with that, I just want to say again, I support staying with our Legislative District 2. Our City Council will be considering a resolution tomorrow night also in support of this.

Again I thank you, members of the Commission and Mr. Chairman for allowing me to speak here this evening.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Mayor, and to that likeness of the Chairman in the background there, that's a tribute to New Jersey as well, particularly Hoboken.

Thank you so much.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Tala Ismail, followed by Amir Kahn.

TALA ISMAIL: Good evening. My name is Tala Ismail, and I am an aspiring attorney from Essex County, born and raised in Bloomfield. I led the Palestinian American Community Center's Census work in 2020 as their Civic Engagement Coordinator.

My work during the Census gave me a unique experience in directly seeing how my community has grown over the last decade, and how we expect to continue to grow in the coming decade. Additionally, most recently, I completed a course called *Legislation* at Rutgers Law School -- Newark, which emphasized the important role adequate representation plays in upholding constituent trust in the legislative process, and how districting decisions directly impact that representation.

As such, it saddens me to see my community is not taken into consideration during the redistricting process, as the process primarily uses census demographic data which categorizes Arab and MENA communities as white. Because we are not counted in the census as our own racial or ethnic category, we are invisible in government processes, cutting our ability to get funding or our policy concerns addressed.

You have heard from others in my community and you will hear from even more about these policy concerns. As a community, we are excluded in many governmental and policy issues that impact our lives on a daily basis, in many ways that are often unique from the impact felt by the very same policies within different communities. Additionally, this inability to count our community as a unique ethnic/racial category limits the data available to demonstrate disparities and to address unique, specific needs.

For example, language access needs are a big concern for my community. PACC specifically confronted language access needs in the State government when we realized that voter registration forms were not available in Arabic. And we know that this problem exists at every level of State government when the public seeks information or services.

My communities of interest are concentrated in Essex County, primarily in the townships and cities of Montclair, Bloomfield, Nutley, Newark, and West Orange. My community, the Arab American community, originates from culturally, geographically, and religiously diverse countries, embodying many experiences and narratives that cannot be distilled to a singular experience or partisan lines.

I hope you consider the information I have provided in your map making process to ensure we can address language access, healthcare disparities, and other social service needs.

Thank you so much.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Ms. Ismail. Duly noted.

We appreciate your testimony.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Amir Khan is no longer in the Zoom room. The next speaker will be John Lyons, followed by Roger Mazowiecki.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Madam Secretary.

JOHN LYONS: Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony tonight as part of the hearing. My name is John Lyons and I'm a resident of Hammonton here in western Atlantic County. I've lived in Hammonton my entire life and voted in every general election here since I turned 18.

I want to address you tonight about the 8th Legislative District, and specifically why Hammonton should remain in it. As I am sure you are all aware, for many years -- well before I was born, in fact -- Hammonton was part of the 2nd Legislative District, which covered Atlantic County in its entirety. As South Jersey grew and Hammonton changed from a small agricultural community to a thriving bedroom community, our population grew with it. In more recent years, the political winds shifted and we found Hammonton placed into the 9th District. During our time in the 9th District, our legislators did their part to support Hammonton, but there

was significant differences between Hammonton and many of the shore communities that made up the 9th District during that time.

In 2011, Hammonton was placed into the 8th District, where it remains today. Over the past decade, Hammonton has enjoyed the benefits of close ties with our sister communities in the 8th District, which not only share our values but also have many other things in common. Hammonton is primarily an agriculture community, providing a convenient commute to Atlantic City, Philadelphia, and other areas in the region. Places like Shamong, Medford Lakes, and Medford share these similar features, which positions them to benefit from a legislative agenda that can cover several communities in the District, as I had mentioned previously.

Hammonton is also a growing arts community, anchored by our Eagle Theatre, located in our scenic downtown, which draws thousands of visitors each year. Fortunately, Hammonton has benefited from private investment, State funding, and grants which have allowed for improvements and provided opportunities in this community. Again, our downtown has many similarities to other 8th District towns including Mount Holly, Lumberton, and Medford.

Moreover, in the last three elections in the 8th District, the winner of each election at both the Senate and Assembly levels has been decided by only a few thousand votes. These razor-thin margins are a testament to the fact that the 8th District is appropriately balanced, allowing for continuously competitive elections. In fact, Hammonton's own Michael Torrissi, Jr., won a seat representing the 8th District in the Assembly this past November.

Much of the testimony tonight has touched on or focused on the representation of New Jersey's Latino community. I submit that maintaining Hammonton in the 8th District would continue to promote Latino diversity. In fact, 23 percent of Hammonton's residents who were a part of the most recent Census identified as Hispanic. In our public schools, one in four of our students come from a Spanish-speaking, English as a Second Language household.

If you've ever visited Hammonton, we are known for our Italian restaurants, businesses, and culture. But Hammonton's Puerto Rican and Mexican communities are also a growing, vibrant part of this community. Our downtown is filled with first- and second-generation Latino-owned businesses that bring diversity and growth to our town.

In closing, Hammonton is appropriately placed in the 8th District and should remain there. The 40,467 Republican, Democrat, and independent voters who chose Michael Torrissi, Jr., this past November would see their votes disenfranchised only after a few months of casting them if Hammonton were to be moved into a different district. While the Commission certainly has many choices to make, moving Hammonton out of the 8th District is not one of them.

Thank you for your time and consideration this evening.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. Lyons, I appreciate that.

Madam Secretary, next speaker.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Roger Mazowiecki, followed by Alexander McConnell.

ROGER MAZOWIECKI: I would like to thank the Commissioner for giving me the chance to speak tonight.

It's my understanding that the Commission is thinking about dividing the town of Wayne, which I've been a resident of for 28 years, into two congressional districts -- the 9th and the 11th. And after speaking with several of my friends throughout the town, none of us seem to want that. We want to be one block, all our concerns are the same -- especially when it comes to the Federal funding that goes out.

I just want to thank you for the time for letting me speak.
Thank you very much.

MR. JONES: Thank you, sir.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Alexander McConnell, followed by Michael Meloro.

ALEXANDER McCONNELL: Hi, everyone; thanks for letting us take part in this process.

So I have a few concerns. First is maintaining and producing majority-minority districts that are politically competitive -- the result that we can gain legislative districts that will incentivize both Republicans and Democrats alike to field candidates of color. The current District 36 has an opportunity to do this in the South Bergen County area. This means largely keeping current boundaries of the District, keeping diverse municipalities such as North Arlington, East Rutherford, and Ridgefield together.

Also, on top of this, districts should also include municipalities that contain generally similar interests. One example of this is in the current District 5 in South Jersey, where the City of Camden is placed in a district that is actually majority white. Similarly, Pennsauken is

in District 6, which is also majority white. Willingboro is in District 7, which is also majority white. But a majority-minority district in South Jersey can be created by merging all three of those municipalities together.

The current District 27 is also a messy district. Harding Township and Chatham Township in Morris County are both in the same district as Maplewood and West Orange, which, you know, considering numerous factors, are widely different -- (indiscernible) count, population density, voting patterns, and the general character of those municipalities.

So I hope these are things that you guys consider when you show us the new map.

Thanks.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Mr. McConnell, I appreciate that.

Madam Secretary, next speaker.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Michael Meloro, followed by Daniella Mendez.

MICHAEL MELORO: Hello, I'm Michael, I'm from Flemington, New Jersey.

I have a few concerns, so I want to go over first that I think it's very good to see a lot of young people and a lot of minorities talking about their interests. And I've watched a bunch of the other hearings, and I've seen this as a common thread. And to piggyback off of what Mr. McConnell said, I do think it's also important to have minority-majority electorates that are in competitive districts. And on top of that, I think one of the concerns about the protection of incumbents is actually something that could further disenfranchise not only minority voters, but just voters in general, because if

you're considering incumbents -- if the Legislature is already predominantly white, if you're protecting incumbents, you're going to be continuing to protect people who are not representative of their constituencies. So I think that's something to consider; that obviously some incumbents, like Parker Space in the 24th or various Hudson County incumbents, are going to be safe forever. We can see a lot of suburban and also even some inner city -- like south Bergen County or northeastern Essex County -- area people shuffled around, and more competitive districts.

I'd also like to address that there's a few districts that I think are kind of not really representing their communities well. So for example, one of these is actually a safe Republican district -- so this isn't based on partisanship -- but District 23, that stretches from the towns in Warren County like Phillipsburg all the way down to Bedminster, Bridgewater, Peapack -- that district, for example, is a very disparate demographic. You have Warren County, which is very rural and also is not as well-off, and has different interests, as the Somerset County area. And even though, currently, all the legislators are from Warren County, in either case, even in these majority white constituencies, there are communities of interest that are together, and one of them is not being represented -- one being a more wealthy suburban demographic, and one being a working class rural demographic.

And then also, in Central Jersey, the Middlesex County area, a potential Asian influence district, that would be nearly 35 percent Asian, could be created by merging West Windsor and Plainsboro, which share school districts and are currently separate but are actually-- And South Brunswick as well, which are very similar municipalities in demographic, but

are separated in order, perhaps-- District 16 is more competitive, but when we create competitive districts we also need to understand that we shouldn't eschew majority-minority districts.

And then lastly, I would just like to speak that this current map -- Republicans have been systemically underrepresented on this map. So in the 2013 election -- which was Christie's landslide year -- Republicans actually won a majority of the vote. I tabulated the exact statistics from the State, and it was about 51.5 to 48.5. So Republicans only got 16 seats, which they continued to get whether they got 40 percent of the vote or 52 percent of the vote. So I think we need to consider partisan fairness as well.

And lastly, I just think it would be nice if we could get a proposal before the Commission enacts it. Because what we saw with Congress was that we read the headline that the map was approved before we saw the proposal.

Thank you for your time.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much.

Madam Secretary, next speaker.

Ms. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Daniella Mendez, followed by Frank Minor.

DANIELLA MENDEZ: Good evening Commission, staff, and fellow New Jerseyans. My name is Daniella Mendez, I am a social and economic justice activist, and a member of the Dover Board of Education. I am here this evening in my personal capacity -- I do not speak for the Board.

Dover has a small-town feel with big city culture. The majority of our community is made up of new immigrants from Latin America. Our walkable downtown area features some great restaurants with

food from all over Latin America. If you haven't already, I invite all of you to visit Dover and indulge in our great food and rich culture soon.

Although our culture is rich, we are one of the poorest communities in Morris County. We are in the 25th Legislative District, along with some of the wealthiest communities in the state, like the Mendhams and Bernardsville. The needs of Dover are drowned out far too often by communities that are whiter and richer. There are numerous communities that share common interests with Dover but are not a part of our legislative district. For example, Parsippany is nearby and has a large population of new immigrants from Latin America and Asia, but they are not a part of the 25th District.

As the Commission moves forward in the process, it is my hope that you take into consideration the needs of diverse communities, and not just of those that look like you. I urge you to redraw the 25th Legislative District to include Rockaway Township, Morris Plains, Parsippany, and Madison, while excluding Mendham Borough, Mendham Township, Washington Township, and Bernardsville, to ensure fair and equitable representation.

Nelson Mandela once said, "We must work together to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth, opportunity, and power in our society."

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Ms. Mendez, we really appreciate that testimony and that quote from one of my favorite individuals in world history.

Thank you.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Frank Minor, followed by Fedah Mohammed.

MR. JONES: Welcome, Mayor.

MAYOR FRANK MINOR: Good morning -- good evening, Chairman. Good evening, my name is Frank Minor and I'm Mayor of Logan Township, which is located in Gloucester County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight.

Speaking as a Mayor from South Jersey, I just want to say that I applaud the appointment of Commissioner Matos, particularly because of her ties to South Jersey and her long record of service, and the increased diversity her appointment brings to the New Jersey Legislative Apportionment Commission. With the inclusion of Commissioner Matos, I am very confident that the real interests of South Jersey residents will be fairly represented on the Commission.

Thank you, Chairman Jones, for your courage and leadership. And I thank all the Commissioners for your time and attention.

I yield my time.

Thank you so much.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Mayor, I appreciate those comments.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Fedah Mohammed, followed by Rania Mustafa.

FEDAH MOHAMMED: Good evening everyone, thank you for the opportunity and allowing me to testify tonight. I would like to take a

moment to thank the Commissioners for this opportunity to address the concerns of my community.

My name is Fedah Mohammed; I grew up in Hudson County, and currently live in Secaucus, New Jersey. I am part of the Arab American community, and a recent college graduate working closely to engage my community as part of the Palestinian American Community Center.

The diverse Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African populations may trace their ancestry to different countries, speak different dialects or languages, practice different religions, and fall into a broad range of socioeconomic categories. However, we have much more in common and want to be represented by leaders that understand our community's ethnic diversity and unique needs. My community of interest includes people with Egyptian, Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian, Yemeni, Sudanese, Jordanian, Moroccan, and Chaldean ancestry, to name a few. We share a community with a rich history of economic development and social concerns that need to be addressed by policies that reflect our community needs.

In Hudson County, where I live, the Arab community is concentrated in Jersey City, which is The Heights area; Bayonne, North Bergen, Guttenberg, Union City, West New York, Fairview, and mainly centered around Bergen Line. We can trace our economic contributions to New Jersey by Syrian immigrants that established silk manufacturing soon after the city was founded in 1792, and by 1924 there were 25 Arab American-owned factories in Paterson and Hoboken.

There are an estimated 113 Islamic nonprofit organizations in New Jersey and many Arab organizations throughout New Jersey. Just to name a few, Palestinian American Community Center is one,

Wafa House, Islamic Center of Passaic County, and Arab American Counseling Services. They have become a home and a safe haven for thousands of people seeking assistance and connection with their community, but we are also limited in our ability to provide social services, as many funding streams are limited to data and government sources of information that do not track my community.

We have many shared concerns, including labor conditions, discrimination, civil rights, equality, access to healthcare, culturally sensitive integrated health and social services, language accessibility, political representation, safe infrastructure, environmental justice, ancestral homeland conflicts, and immigrant issues -- in addition to the constant work of being accepted as part of the American society and its politics. This community of interest shares uniquely immigrant experiences, with specific community needs that can only be addressed by someone who understands the complexity of my community.

I really hope you all consider the community of interest maps we have provided as you continue your work for fair representation in New Jersey, and I thank you again for your time.

MR. JONES: We thank you, Ms. Mohammed, we appreciate your testimony.

MS. MOHAMMED: Thank you.

MR. JONES: Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Rania Mustafa, followed by Mara Novak.

MR. JONES: Ms. Mustafa.

R A N I A M U S T A F A: Good evening Commission; thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Rania Mustafa, I was born and raised in Paterson, the epicenter of Arabs in New Jersey, and I have lived within the same one-mile radius for most of my life. I am here on behalf of my community and as Executive Director of the Palestinian American Community Center, or PACC for short.

The Palestinian American Community Center has quickly become a staple in my community. In the short time our organization has existed, we have become pillars in educating and providing critical services my community needs. We currently run several programs to address community needs like census count, civic engagement, COVID relief and assistance, youth programs, addressing public health needs with drug abuse and addiction series; and we have started collecting critical data about our community's needs by providing community surveys. Actually, Governor Murphy also shouted us out for some of our COVID relief efforts.

New Jersey is home to one of the most diverse Arab and Middle Eastern and North African communities in the country; specifically, the second-largest community of Palestinians in the country. At least 3.5 million Americans of Arab descent live in this country, yet we are not represented in the census data as unique racial and ethnic categories, and we are still categorized under the "white" race. Our community of interest primarily lives in Passaic County, Hudson County, Bergen County, Essex County, Union, Middlesex, Monmouth, Camden, Gloucester, and Salem counties.

My organization has created community-of-interest maps, highlighting all the cities in those counties that have a significant Arab population, for your consideration. Specifically, in my County of Passaic, we are the epicenter of the Arab American community of New Jersey. Paterson, Clifton, North Haledon, Haledon, Prospect Park, Woodland Park, Totowa, Little Falls, Wayne, and Pompton Lakes all have significant Arab populations, specifically focusing on the 07508 zip code being one of the most concentrated areas. South Paterson Main Street, known as Little Ramallah or Little Istanbul, is a 10-block stretch that borders Clifton; these 10 blocks are lined with everyday amenities to keep a vibrant Arab American community. For example, barber shops, doctors offices, halal meat markets, Muslim legal services, and other businesses that serve our community.

This community of interest originates from culturally, geographically, and religiously diverse countries embodying many experiences and narratives that cannot be distilled to a single experience or partisan life. Without a fair count of our community in the census, we are constantly invisible and not factored as part of the political process of redistricting, despite our important and essential impact on the growth and making of our cities and country as a whole. The population identified as Arab-speaking in the US Census grew more than 42 percent between 2000 and 2017. The number of New Jerseyans who claim an Arab ancestry has more than doubled since the census first measured ethnic categories in 1980. It is among the fastest-growing Arab populations in the country.

The Census estimates a statewide Arab American population is 116,240 individuals. The Arab American Institute estimates about 257,868 Arab Americans living in New Jersey. That is a gross

undercount of our community's population. That is why we have submitted our own community-of-interest map, and we thank the Commission for taking it into account in the map making process. In our map, we point to the cities and important landmarks like mosques, churches, businesses -- last line, I promise -- community organizations and schools with high populations of Arab Americans in New Jersey.

Thank you so much for your time and your attention to this matter.

MR. JONES: Thank you Ms. Mustafa for that quick summation; we appreciate it.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Mara Novak, followed by Kimberly O'Brien.

M A R A N O V A K: Thank you to Chairmen Jones and Barlas, to Judge Carchman, and to all the members of the Commission for this opportunity to offer testimony. And a special welcome to newly named Commissioner Matos. I'm really delighted that you were appointed to this important role.

I am Mara Novak, I am the Co-Executive Director, along with Leslie Bockol, who spoke earlier, of NJ 11th for Change. As a grassroots organization centered in Congressional District 11, we focus closely on the needs and demographics of people living in our territory, including the formerly 10, and now 8 legislative districts that make up our territory.

In addition to all the other factors I know you have to balance in this monumental task of redistricting, NJ 11th for Change urges you to create districts that take into account the changing demographics of our state's population. In our part of North Jersey we see a significant growth,

particularly in the AAPI and Latino communities. We encourage you to consider these communities of interest, as you draw the new districts, to strengthen their voices.

There are significant and expanding AAPI populations in the CD11 and CD11-adjacent towns in Parsippany, Livingston, Millburn, Montville, Mountain Lakes, Boonton Township, as well as in Hanover and East Hanover. The Latino populations in Morristown, Dover, Morris Township, Wharton, Mine Hill, Rockaway Borough, Rockaway Township, Roxbury, Mount Olive, and Victory Gardens continue to grow rapidly as well.

New maps should be drawn to keep as many of these towns together as possible to give the communities of interest a larger voice. At NJ 11th for Change, we prioritize government representation that is transparent, responsive, and accountable to all residents. The demographics of New Jersey are changing and it is a disservice to our current voters if districts are drawn reflecting the demographics of the past, and that no longer accurately reflect the people who live in them now.

Thank you so much for the work you're doing on this Commission.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Ms. Novak. I appreciate your testimony.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Kimberly O'Brien, followed by Layla Odeh.

It looks like Ms. O'Brien has left the Zoom room. The next speaker is Layla Odeh, followed by Adrian Orozco.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Madam Secretary.

L A Y L A O D E H: Good evening, my name is Layla Odeh, I live in Bergen County, and I am here with the Palestinian American Community Center located in Clifton, as lead of our Get Out the Vote team. And I am also a college student attending Montclair State University.

My Arab American community in Bergen County is concentrated in Bergenfield, Dumont, Fair Lawn, Paramus, Hackensack, Teaneck, Bogota, Garfield, and Elmwood Park. However, the city of Hasbrouck Heights, where I grew up, neighbors these towns and was a predominantly white community where I felt constantly left out and misunderstood, especially at school. I deeply understand not being seen or represented; this is not a unique sentiment in my community, as our government does the same when the US Census counts people who hold Arab ancestry, or other Middle Eastern or North African origins, within the white racial category.

The Arab or Middle Eastern and North African community, though lumped into the white racial category by the US Census, is quite distinct from white populations. Being lumped into the white race category has real and detrimental effects on our community, whether it be health, socioeconomic relief, admissions into schools, psychological effects, and impact on immigration issues. The fact is, Arab and Middle Eastern and North African Americans have distinct issues and experiences, and national-level data on these communities have obscured regional variations, such as disadvantaged communities in Passaic County.

Yet despite us largely finding ourselves in such disadvantaged positions, our contributions to New Jersey continue to be strong and significant, and need to be taken into account by our government

and established political processes. The South Paterson Arab American community is a great example of our economic contributions and footprint to New Jersey, as it is currently leading economic development for the entire City of Paterson. An estimated 10,000 Arab American residents throughout New Jersey visit the South Paterson Arab business corridor nearly every weekend, bringing in huge economic opportunities to our community.

Additionally, there are over 100 mosques and religious centers that service the growing Arab population of New Jersey. Constituents within the Arab American community have created a sense of empowerment within themselves and for other community members through these businesses and religious spaces.

It can only be preserved if we are kept together and receive the representation needed to address policy change and unique community needs.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you Ms. Odeh, I appreciate your testimony.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Mike Owens, followed by Marc Parisi.

MIKE OWENS: Thank you, Chairman, I appreciate the time, I'll try to keep it short and sweet -- as well as Madam Secretary.

I live in Somers Point, I am actually on council, and I would have to echo these fine statements by our previous councilman Kirk Gerety, as well as our Mayor, Jack Glasser, in regards to redistricting.

We don't want to fall into the category of somebody's stepchild going into District 1. We are a diverse community, and we-- The people of our community, we're all as one when it comes down to people going to and from work within Atlantic County to Atlantic City and back; as well as our schools are all tied into together. And to split the high school in two different districts, it would really be -- it wouldn't be good at all. Right now, I really think that things are going well and we're being well-represented by our legislators.

And pretty much that's all I have to say; I'll just keep it short and sweet with that, and I appreciate the time.

MR. JONES: Thank you, we appreciate you; and Somers Point is well-represented tonight, Councilman.

Thank you so much.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Marc Parisi, followed by Yasmeen Pauling.

M A R C P A R I S I: Hi, good evening everyone; can you hear me?

MR. JONES: Yes we can.

MR. PARISI: Okay.

First of all, I wanted to say good evening to Judge Carchman and the Commissioners, and thank you for giving us this opportunity to testify. I would imagine that because of the pandemic, and being able to do this virtually, that there is significantly more interest in testimony provided for this process this year as opposed to in the past, so I think that's really great that you guys get all this additional feedback from the communities.

I live in Howell, New Jersey, down in Monmouth County. I am a homeowner, I've been down here since 2014. I am speaking on behalf of myself just as an ordinary citizen, I'm not representing any organization. Howell is part of the Legislative District 30. I find this whole process to be very interesting and important.

I wanted to share my thoughts about LD30 for you to consider. As you know, LD30 includes municipalities in both Monmouth and Ocean Counties. For the past 10 years, the LD30 elections have been disproportionately lopsided in favor of Republican candidates. In fact, these elections have not been competitive. The Republican candidates have won every election, often doubling or tripling the number of votes received by the Democratic candidates.

We cannot talk about redistricting LD30 without acknowledging Lakewood as one of the fastest-growing cities in New Jersey, and certainly the fastest-growing in LD30. In fact, the Lakewood population has grown by 46 percent between 2010 and 2020, growing from approximately 92,000 to 135,000 residents. This alone warrants examination if you are considering changes to LD30.

According to the 2020 Census, LD30's population is roughly 270,000 people. So that means that 50 percent of our District is made up by just 1 of its 14 towns. This is especially egregious, because it only is one of only two towns within the District that are in Ocean County rather than Monmouth County. It is also worth mentioning that the State Senator for LD30 resides in Ocean County as well.

As you move forward with redrawing the legislative map, I would ask you to consider that perhaps Point Pleasant and Lakewood should

be redistricted into Ocean County, and LD30 should add different towns such as Neptune and/or Freehold. In doing so, this may also achieve the goal of making the LD30 elections more competitive.

That's all I have to share tonight, everyone. I appreciated hearing everyone's testimony, and thank you for your time this evening.

MR. JONES: Thank you, and we appreciate your comments and testimony.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Yasmeen Pauling, followed by Felisha Reyes Morton.

Y A S M E E N P A U L I N G: Hello, everybody, good evening. I am Yasmeen Pauling, and I am also speaking on behalf of New Jersey Working Families.

I know I'm not the first person tonight to say this, and I hope I'm not the last, but really, we just really want to applaud the decision by Chairman LeRoy Jones -- also the entire Commission -- to appoint a Latino representative to the Commission. And this brings a desperately needed diversity to the Commission, especially considering that the Latino population comprises almost 21 percent of the entire population of New Jersey.

So it genuinely takes a lot of courage and leadership, but this is also something that the community has been fighting for, for a very long time. So it's really nice to see that the pleas have been answered and that, really, Chairman Jones, your leadership today really has helped define a new way forward.

Also, I really want to say congratulations to Laura herself. She's really the perfect candidate for this position -- someone who was born and grew up in South Jersey, has worked a variety of governmental and public service positions. So she is well-equipped with the knowledge of South Jersey and is already a member of a Commission advocating for South Jersey, as the Chair of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission, which represents part of 53 municipalities across New Jersey.

And so it is really Laura's unique experience and her South Jersey roots that just allow her to be the perfect candidate for this, and we just know this is incredibly, incredibly important. Considering that this new legislative map will be serving the entire state for the next 10 years, and it's really -- it's not even just important, it's an imperative that every person be represented equally and adequately; and no one should be putting their own political and personal agendas above the more than, what, 9 million people in this state that it would affect.

And that's it, that's my time.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Ms. Pauling, I really appreciate your comments.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Felisha Reyes Morton, followed by Anna "Cuqui" Rivera.

FELISHA REYES MORTON: Good evening to the Chairman and the board. My name is Felisha Reyes Morton, and I am a Councilwoman to Camden City. I wanted to come onto the meeting tonight, where I am honored and grateful to be here with all of you tonight, and even more grateful for all the speakers that have come before me.

And so I wanted to congratulate-- Well first, I wanted to thank the Chairman and the board for their leadership decision in making sure that diversity is represented across the Commission, hence across the state. I especially am super (indiscernible) and proud of Commissioner Matos, seeing a fellow Latina leader in a position of leadership. It's important not just for Latinos, but for the South Jersey region in general.

And I really want to thank Dr. Campos-Medina for her earlier points on the challenges that affect Latino families every day -- and not just Latinos, again, but immigrants as well. And so I'm looking forward to continuing to support Commissioner Matos and the Commission in ensuring that, one, diversity is spread across the board; and that South Jersey, with Ms. Matos' roots, are very well represented in processing the move forward.

So thank you so much.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Councilwoman.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Anna "Cuqui" Rivera, followed by Karol Ruiz.

ANNA "CUQUI" RIVERA: Good evening everyone.

I spoke and testified before this Commission earlier from a personal lens. Today, I speak as the Board Secretary of the Latino Action Network.

I want to -- as well as everyone else, again -- very much thank Democratic party Chairman LeRoy Jones for appointing a Latina to this Commission. Laura is a prominent member of our community and has a long, successful track record in State politics and in public affairs.

Latinos, as we know, represent more than 20 percent of the New Jersey population, and from the beginning of this process we have called upon the Commission to properly represent our state's diversity. While this appointment is a good first step toward representation, it is critical that in the coming weeks the Commission work closely with advocates, and continue to do so, to develop a set of State legislative maps that properly represent our state and our community, and build on the gains we have made during the last legislative reappointment process.

Our state is one of the most diverse in the nation, as we know, and our Legislature has to reflect that. Following the 2020 Census count, Latinos comprised 20.9 percent of New Jersey's total population. However, Latinos continued to lag behind in representation in the State Legislature and top political appointments. Latinos make up only 7 percent of the State Senate and only 8 percent of the General Assembly. The lack of representation has huge consequences for the underserved communities. As a growing segment of the state's population, Latinos continue to have little voice in decisions made in Trenton. Latinos are left out of important conversations, and have little power to influence decisions that are made due to the lack of representation.

However, there is an opportunity for New Jersey to put forward a fair and accurate redistricting effort that reflects the power of the Latino vote. In the last 10 years, our communities have continued to grow across the state, and that needs to be represented in this future map. The Latino Action Network is working with a coalition of organizations that represent New Jersey's communities of color to draw a map that represents

the best opportunities for representation for our communities, while also meeting the other requirements that this Commission must consider.

According to the latest census, people of color represent almost half of the state's population. They have been working on a map with our coalition partners that demonstrates how at least half of the state's 40 legislative districts can be drawn with majority minority populations. We will be sharing this map with you in the coming weeks.

We ask that you take our recommendation seriously and make every effort to maximize the number of majority minority districts in a manner that truly does represent all of the diversity of our state.

I thank you so much. God bless you, Laura.

I did make it within three minutes. (laughter)

MR. JONES: Yes, you did.

MS. RIVERA: There we go.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much Ms. Rivera.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Karol Ruiz, followed by Yash Shah.

KAROL RUIZ: I'm a resident of Dover, Morris County; I serve as the Co-President of Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center. We're a nonprofit, nonpartisan faith-based human rights advocacy organization. I also serve on the Dover Board of Education, but I don't speak for the Dover Board of Education. I share this with you to demonstrate that I have a full understanding of the needs of the Dover school community.

As the poorest community in Morris County, with the highest COVID-19-related death rate in the county, and as an underfunded school district without access to SDA funds, our community has dire needs.

Dover is in LD25. We share a school district with Victory Gardens and Mine Hill, and geographic borders with Randolph and Wharton, so it makes sense for us to be in the same legislative district as those municipalities. Morristown, Morris Plains, and Morris Township share a school district, but Morris Plains is not in LD25; they should be. Our neighbors in Rockaway Township share a border with us, but they are not in LD25; they should be.

Dover is a working-class immigrant community that includes unhoused residents. In sharp contrast, the Mendhams, Washington Township, and Bernardsville are some of the wealthiest communities in the entire state. The lack of affordable housing exists everywhere in the 25th. However, LD25 representatives seem to hear only the NIMBY arguments against affordable home ownership and rentals coming from the wealthier municipalities, while ignoring the loud calls to end homelessness from Dover residents. Bernardsville isn't even in Morris County; the rest of LD25 is in Morris County.

Dover is small and suburban, with some urban characteristics. Washington Township is large with rural characteristics. Dover is a community with a majority of new immigrants from Latin America. Nearby Parsippany is also home to a large community of new immigrants from Latin America and Asia, but Parsippany is not in LD25. Parsippany should be. The impact of this unfair apportionment has left Dover ignored

for a decade -- we were lumped into the Legislative Congressional District 7 and in 25 without our friends and neighbors with common shared interests.

After the murder of George Floyd, Wind of the Spirit partnered with Black Lives Matter Morristown to present eight marches, rallies, and teach-ins for our neighbors and with our neighbors here in Morris County. Where did we march? Rockaway Township -- not in LD25 -- Morris Town, Morris Township, Roxbury, Boonton, and Madison -- also left out of LD25. These marches and rallies showed that our calls for racial justice in our community need to be heard by our representatives. But they weren't.

Please, ensure that Parsippany, Morris Plains, Rockaway Township, and Madison join Dover in LD25. And please visit us in Dover, maybe after you take up Paterson on their invitation. You will fall in love as I have.

MR. JONES: Thank you so much, Ms. Ruiz. I appreciate those comments.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Yash Shah, followed by Adam Sheridan.

MR. JONES: Mr. Shah, you're up.

YASH SHAH: Thank you Judge Carchman, Chairman Jones, Chairman Barlas, and all the members of the Legislative Reapportionment Commission, for allowing me to speak again today.

My name is Yash Shah, and I am the Executive Director of the South Asian Registration Initiative. I spoke a few months ago regarding what I believe should be notable considerations that must be taken into account when creating the new map, with respect to protecting the

representation of the Asian community within the legislative processes of the State. But I believe it's important to stress other key points as the Commission continues to hear public testimony.

Also, before I begin, I would like to also commend Chairman Jones on his recent decision to appoint Laura Matos, the only Latino on the entire Commission. This is an important step to ensuring that voices of underrepresented communities are in the room when the decisions are made. We all know how important it is to unify communities of color so that those communities of interest emerge. Sometimes that leads to more minority legislators, but more importantly it leads to communities unified.

For example, in District 11, Monmouth County's communities of color, near the shoreline in Red Bank, Asbury Park, Neptune, Long Branch, Ocean Township, Eatontown, and Tinton Falls, form a 34 percent minority population. The investment and representation along the shore towns deserves a champion who will fight for those constituents. I have heard various stories from friends and family members living in Long Branch and Asbury Park who have struggled from the magnified effects resulting from the simultaneous occurrence of COVID and environmental issues. These issues and communities of interest are just as important as any historically underrepresented ethnic group, and therefore require just as much representation as any other community.

Many other districts around the state presently unify minority communities such as the AAPI community without packing them together to dilute their overall representation. Today, I would also like to extend the same principles in proposing that the Apportionment Commission put Freehold, Marlboro, and Colts Neck within the same district due to their

clear status as communities of interest. These three towns all have considerable Asian populations within them at this current point in time; but more importantly, within the next 10 years, through multiple factors, they will have drastic increases in their Asian populations.

With a shared high school district serving as the backbone between these towns, Freehold, Marlboro, and Colts Neck's current notable Asian populations will increase, as the Wooleytown Temple is the only place of worship in the area for the South Asian subset of the Asian population. Therefore, I urge you to join these towns under a single district as one means of ensuring Asian representation, not only today, but also during the next decade. They are currently in two different legislative districts, and that is not helpful. We should also be looking at communities such as Manalapan and Holmdel nearby -- also in two legislative districts that have significant AAPI populations.

In conclusion, the AAPI community is important, and is clustered throughout Monmouth County and other parts of the state. This was reflected in the recent victories last year. But on the other hand, we must also consider the other communities of interest that directly effect not only the AAPI community, but also many other minority communities, to truly have sustained representation.

I thank the Commission for your consideration on this.

MR. JONES: Thanks again, Mr. Shah. Good seeing you again, and thanks again for your testimony.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Adam Sheridan, followed by Jack Surrency.

A D A M S H E R I D A N: Good evening; my name is Adam Sheridan, and I am a lifelong resident of South Jersey. I want to speak briefly tonight in favor of today's decision to appoint Laura Matos to the Redistricting Commission.

As a member of the Pinelands Commission, Ms. Matos has unique insight into the needs and priorities of the greater South Jersey community. It has been suggested in media reports that this decision was somehow a slight to our region, but on the contrary, I would argue that Ms. Matos' inclusion should be seen as a considerable asset for South Jersey. More than that, it is of the utmost importance that a Latina woman serve on this Committee. People of Latino/Latina ethnicity make up 21 percent of the population of our state, and they deserve to be represented as we make decisions about the next decade of our government.

There aren't (*sic*) enough people in positions of power who look like me, have last names like mine, and come from a similar background and community. We should strive to create a Commission that looks like the people in the communities that it serves, and this is a step in the right direction. Creating a just and representative government means that white men must remember to step aside and create space for others. This is clearly one of those moments, and as a resident of South Jersey I applaud today's decision.

Thank you for your time.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. Sheridan.

Madam Secretary, next up.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Next up is Jack Surrency, followed by Dennis Tapp.

JACK SURRENCY: Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Jack Surrency, and I hail from the great City of Bridgeton in Cumberland County.

As a former County Commissioner, I was happy to hear that Commissioner Matos has been appointed to the New Jersey Legislation Apportionment Commission. Cumberland County is a very diverse county with a significant Hispanic population. The appointment of Commissioner Matos, a Latino Commissioner with roots in South Jersey, adds an important voice to the Commission for our residents. I believe that the interests of South Jersey will be well represented by Commissioner Matos and the current membership of this Commission.

And once again, I would like to thank each and every one of you Commissioners for allowing me to speak for the City of Bridgeton and all of Cumberland County residents.

Thank you very much.

MR. JONES: Thank you very much.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Dennis Tapp, followed by Ederle Vaughan.

DENNIS TAPP: Hi there, this is Dennis Tapp.

I am a former elected official in Somers Point. And just like you were saying, Somers Point is being represented here.

You called out a woman before, Kim O'Brien. Kim O'Brien had to bail out because she had to start her Democratic Club meeting at 8 pm. She texted me. Ironically, I am the President of the Republican

Club in the City of Somers Point, and I will not speak for her, but we are working together here as a community.

To us, it's very important that we stay in District 2. I know Kirk Gerety, another former elected official, got up and spoke, and I echo those same sentiments, as well as Mayor Jack Glasser and Mike Owens. But really, the most important thing here is that Somers Point is working class, and a lot of the employment has to do with the casinos, and it has to do with the businesses that are surrounding the casinos.

To have your legislator that represents you in your town also represent that same industry is an advantage to our taxpayers -- to the residents of Somers Point. We are very diverse here, and you need to have access to your elected officials. Our Senator lives in the next town over, in Egg Harbor Township. Both of our Assembly people -- one lives in Margate, and one lives in Atlantic City. Who better to represent us than having your former Mayor of Atlantic City as the Assemblyman there? It just makes sense.

Atlantic County -- or Ocean, forgive me, Cape May County, District 1, they have different needs than what we have here. And I feel that having those representatives and having the residents feel more comfortable -- knowing that every 10 years we're flipflopping back from District 1, District 2, it makes everyone feel uneasy, and it's like, what do they really think of us if they just throw us around?

Right here, we're more than just numbers -- and I know you know that, but we're more than just numbers. There's a lot there that needs representatives that are there to work for us and help us there.

And with that, I want to thank you for your time.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. Tapp; and the chorus of voices from Somers Point has been heard tonight. And the wonderful display of bipartisanship is also a value that hasn't gone unnoticed.

Thank you so much.

MR. TAPP: Actually, she did say she's going to Zoom in, probably in the next meeting.

MR. JONES: Very good. Looking forward to hearing her comments.

MR. TAPP: Thank you.

MR. JONES: Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Ederle Vaughan, followed by Syd Whalley.

E D E R L E V A U G H A N: I want to thank the Commissioners for giving me the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Ederle Vaughan, and I live in Morristown, New Jersey -- more specifically, District 25. I am here today to tell you more about my community and advocate for fair legislative districts here in New Jersey.

District 25 is made up of part of Morris County and part of Somerset County. We have supermarkets, houses of worship, food pantries, and various community programs that service the community. However, there is a need for improvement, such as the need for more effective public transportation. I mention all this to show the need of the service -- a growing population in District 25.

In 2010, the district population was 214,356 people. By 2020, there was a 3.13 percent growth in the population. That's 221,074

people. New Jersey has a chance to lead the nation in diversity and representation in our state. Minorities make up 48 percent of New Jersey's population. In District 25, our minority population increased. Judging by the data, the numbers will continue to grow. This is why there is a need for the Commission to review accurate data and draw the map reflecting population, not political agenda.

Fair districting in New Jersey allows constituents to participate in the electoral process. It prevents community members from feeling marginalized, and it would give more of a sense of the community. District 25 has programs like Community Hope, Dodge Foundation, Clarence House, and Market Street Mission. These are incentives to the communities. These programs can really flourish if there were more districts serviced.

Families in New Jersey have a right to be represented by politicians of our choice; drawing the map that reflects community based off of the data is urgent. Keeping community interest together is a form of long-term investment that New Jersey needs to start looking into.

I want to thank the Commission for giving me the opportunity. I wanted to add my union SEIU 32BJ's support to Chairman Jones' appointment of Laura Matos to the Democratic Legislative Redistricting Commission. It was critical for the diversity of our great state to be represented in the leadership of our community, especially on issues as important as drawing our State legislative districts. We applaud this critical effort.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you Ms. Vaughan, we appreciate your testimony.

Who is up next, Madam Secretary?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Syd Whalley, followed by Helen Zamora-Bustos.

S Y D W H A L L E Y: Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening. And first, thank you Chairman Jones for appointing Laura Matos to the Commission, and thank you Laura, for serving.

For the past 12 years, I have lived in Spring Lake, one of the small beach towns in Southern Monmouth County. For the past five years, I have served as a member of the Spring Lake Council; I was just reelected to serve another three-year term. Tonight, however, I am speaking not on behalf of the Borough of Spring Lake, but as a private citizen and a resident of the beach town.

I have a professional background as a registered nurse and a public interest attorney, so I like things organized and I would like to see systems working the best for people. I understand that there are many, many factors that you must consider when drawing the legislative districts. I appreciate and value the focus on diversity of many of the prior speakers, but tonight I am going to talk to you about geographic considerations.

I would like to encourage the Commission to consider creating a legislative district that encompasses the shore towns in Monmouth County, from Atlantic Highlands down to Manasquan, to better serve the similar interests of these communities. Let me explain.

The towns along the Jersey Shore share many unique issues. First we have our very fragile beaches, which are subject to normal

winds and storms, but also to the potentially devastating effects of climate change. We have unique watershed environments, with many bays, rivers, streams, lakes, etc., affected by the various storms, as well as tremendous development upstream from us. We have our swelling summer populations, which create a strain on our transportation systems, including our roads and highways, as well as our bus and rail systems, which go through all of our towns. Other infrastructure such as hospitals, public safety, utilities, are also impacted by this growing summer population. We also share the predominance of small businesses, which are often very dependent on the tourism industry, which could benefit from shared leadership.

The towns currently work together as much as possible, both informally -- we just call up each other and ask questions; and formally through shared agreements -- shared service agreements. Our first responders provide mutual aid together, and our Shade Tree Commissions and our Environmental Commissions compare notes when possible. But having shared State representatives would provide leadership to us who can help address problems and solve them more efficiently. A great example is the Coastal Lakes Consortium that we all work together with through Monmouth University.

If we were able to take our common concerns to representatives who had experience, we could more efficiently solve them by sharing our successes as well as our failures. We are currently in a district that includes Howell Township, Wall Township, Lakewood, and Farmingdale -- all of which are much larger, but not coastal. My family has a business in Wall for over 50 years, I am familiar with the town, I love the people, but I

feel that Spring Lake would benefit from being with towns who have shared interests specifically as it relates to the shore and shoreline.

In closing, I urge the Commission to put forward a map that unites the coastal towns from Atlantic Highlands to Manasquan.

Thank you.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Ms. Whalley, and your testimony is much appreciated, but more so your service as one of the wonderful healthcare workers, particularly during this awful pandemic.

We thank you for that.

MS. WHALLEY: Thank you.

MR. JONES: Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the last speaker on my list is Helen Zamora-Bustos.

MR. JONES: Ms. Bustos.

HELEN ZAMORA-BUSTOS: Good evening.

MR. JONES: Good evening.

MS. ZAMORA-BUSTOS: My name is Helen Zamora-Bustos, thank you for having me this evening. I want to thank the Commission.

I am a Public Policy Community Organizer with Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center. We are a grassroots nonprofit organization, and as my coworker spoke about before, we are located in Morristown, and we have outreach in Union County as well.

I want to mention that while I am incredibly grateful for the appointment Laura Matos, and I think it brings a very important perspective to the table, this should not be an exception moving forward --

this should be the rule. And there should not be any expectation of any backlash, because all the voices deserve to have a space at the table when important conversations like this one are being had.

Having that said, I want to-- At our organization, we work in great respect with the immigrant, with the Latino immigrant community; and I want to say that it is very important to know that not all Latinos are Hispanic, not all of them identify as white. We are a large group which are very diverse in races. Many of us identify as Black, Indigenous, and we do not only speak Spanish. And it is very important that that is taken into consideration.

Because in spaces like this, when decisions are being made and we are not taken into account, language accessibility continues to be an issue in our community. Language accessibility at schools continues to be an issue in our community. And embracing our source of belonging to the State of New Jersey and the U.S. as a whole should not be a line of division. But we should not ignore that we are different communities and we have differences that are important to be noted. We will not all count as humans if we do not count as individuals first who have equal value. When our society's needs are met, then our voices are heard and those needs continue to be met the more they arise.

If we have a voice at the table and redistricting is done properly, we will have districts that are equally represented by the populations. We are located in Morristown -- I will make this brief -- we are located in Morristown, but our communities and our membership are spread through Morristown, Dover, Rockaway -- which does not belong to the same district; to Parsippany, which does not belong to the same district.

And today I just want to call that to attention. It is very important to our community members and to those maps of community interest to be taken into consideration when you do this remapping.

Thank you very much for opening this space for all of us to be able to express that need.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Ms. Butos. Thank you so much for that testimony.

Madam Secretary, that is a wrap for the speakers?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I don't have any other speakers on my list.

MR. JONES: Okay, with that, Chairman Barlas, any comments?

MR. BARLAS: No, I think it was very informative and it was really good to hear so many people this evening.

I guess we're on next week?

MR. JONES: Yes. Next week, next Wednesday, 6:00 pm.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: I think it's at 12:00 noon--

MR. JONES: 12:00 noon?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: It's on the website.

MR. JONES: Okay, thank you Madam Secretary. I'm a little glazed over now. (laughter)

MR. BARLAS: It's Groundhog Day, by the way, so we know.

MR. JONES: Judge Carchman, any comments before we ask for a motion to adjourn?

JUDGE CARCHMAN: Just that I would like to welcome Laura Matos, who I have not met; and I am looking forward to meeting her in person and serving with her on the Commission.

I've said before -- I'll be very brief, because it's late -- but I've said before that these hearings have been wonderful, the participation has been terrific, and this is participatory democracy at its best. And I am hoping that we can expand that participation in the future.

So I thank everyone for their participation tonight, and their insightful comments that have been very helpful to me.

And thank you to both Chairs and other Commissioners for helping us through this process.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Judge.

Do I have a motion to adjourn?

MR. BARLAS: Motion.

MR. JONES: Do I have a second?

MR. TAFFET: Second.

MR. JONES: It's been moved by Chairman Barlas, seconded by Commissioner Taffet.

All in favor?

ALL: Aye.

MR. JONES: All opposed? (no response)

The ayes have it. We are adjourned.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)