
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: February 9, 2022
6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE 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

Roshard Williams
Office of Legislative Services
Commission Aides

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Therefore, portions of this transcript may not be completely accurate as portions were inaudible and/or indiscernible.*

Meeting Recorded and 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
Laura Matos
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
STATE HOUSE ANNEX • P.O. BOX 068 • TRENTON, NJ 08625-0068

APPOINTED
ELEVENTH MEMBER
Philip S. Carchman

***REVISED
COMMISSION NOTICE**

TO: MEMBERS OF THE APPORTIONMENT COMMISSION

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

SUBJECT: **COMMISSION MEETING - FEBRUARY 9, 2022 /
*OVERFLOW SESSION - FEBRUARY 11, 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, February 9, 2022 at *4:00 PM, with an overflow session on Friday, February 11, 2022 at 10:00 AM.

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>.

To ensure that all who wish to testify can do so, the Chair will limit public testimony to 3 minutes per person. Extra time will be allotted for those needing the assistance of a translator.

(OVER)

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You may also submit written testimony instead of, or in addition to, oral testimony by email to OLSaideAPPC@njleg.org. Written testimony will be included in the Commission's record and distributed to all Commission members.

Issued 2/4/22

*Revised 2/9/22 Changed time to 4:00 PM and added overflow session on Friday, February 11, 2022 at 10:00 AM

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AL BARLAS (Republican Delegation Chair): Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to our, I believe, 10th Public Hearing of the New Jersey Apportionment Commission.

Today is Wednesday, February 9. Before we get started, Madam Secretary, would you like to call the roll?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Testa.

MS. TESTA: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Taffet.

MR. TAFFET: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Matos.

MS. MATOS: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Lavery.

MR. LAVERY: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner DuBois.

MS. DuBOIS: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Cirillo.

MR. CIRILLO: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Bramnick.

MR. BRAMNICK: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Co-Chair Barlas.

MR. BARLAS: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Co-Chair Jones.

LEROY J. JONES, Jr. (Democratic Delegation Chair):

Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Eleventh member Carchman.

JUDGE CARCHMAN: Present.

MR. BARLAS: Great. So, once again, good afternoon everybody. Before we get started, just a couple of housekeeping items I wanted to get off the board.

First of all, this is going to serve as our North Jersey Apportionment Commission meeting. We decided to make it virtual in light of the fact that we anticipated -- clearly appropriately -- that there would be a significant amount of interest from the public to testify and talk about these maps. And given that if we had done it in person, there could have been capacity issues and distancing issues given COVID regulations. We figured this was a much easier way to give everyone an opportunity to participate in the process. That was a decision that all 11 members collectively agreed was the right decision to make.

Given the fact that we are, I think, working through 160 people, at this point, signed up to testify, we have split the meeting into two sessions: today; and there will be an overflow meeting on Friday, that will start at 10 a.m., also virtual. We are asking everyone please, please, please adhere to the three-minute rule. We don't have the ability to automatically mute you, so we're not going to do that, but we ask that you please adhere to that so that we can get through everybody, and everybody has an opportunity to speak.

If you are going to read remarks, we ask that you just summarize them for us, and submit any written testimony that you would like submitted to the Commission members. We get everything that you guys send in, so it's not as if it's going to fall into a black hole. We will all see it, we will all read; but just in an effort to keep the meeting moving and

give everyone an opportunity to talk, we ask that everyone adhere to some level of brevity in their remarks.

So, Madam Secretary, we have one legislator here to speak, correct?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we have Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter.

MR. BARLAS: Assemblywoman Sumter, the floor is yours. Welcome.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHAVONDA SUMTER: Thank you; and thank you so much for the time that you all have invested as a Commission, and the gravity with which you have taken this responsibility.

Just know that I was elected to serve by my peers coming off of the 2020 Census. My District -- the 35th District -- was made a majority-minority district on the 2010 Census. I am going to follow your instructions, Mr. Chairman, and keep my remarks brief, but I will submit the testimony that I have.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Recognizing that New Jersey now is 48 percent minority counted -- that includes Blacks, Latin/Latinx and Asians -- in our state, I am very proud of the diversity of New Jersey.

It is also critical to us as a Legislative Black Caucus that we have representation; but noting that the representation that we have now of 20 Black Caucus members from both the Republican and Democratic party, from Cape May all the way up to Hudson County, did not happen by chance. It actually happened over time with thoughtful maps created in 2010.

I also would argue that during this time, these gains have not been won easily. In fact, we in no way can compare how long it took us to get to this level of representation, with minorities in the State Legislature, to where we came from in the past of not having and holding these seats. Consideration should be given, in fact, to these very, very real challenges that we're faced, in hurdles and barriers crossed, where we worked against the odds to secure representation across the state of Black elected leaders.

So I really want to uphold that standard and hope it is a part of the fairness metric that we're looking to incorporate in the work that you're doing today.

I thank you for posting the Parkway map and the Turnpike map, and even for the group that put together the Unity Map. As a Black Caucus, we're going to drill down deeper into some of the towns and the cities for fairness and representation for communities of color; because we know that our communities are connected to people and families within those zip codes. We must realize that the diverse populations within our state aren't just numbers, but are families with growing concerns and real needs, as we faced during the pandemic, and worked hard to work on those issues.

It is important that our voices are at these tables to fight and stem evictions, homelessness, support families, unemployed workers, people facing food insecurity, and we're doubling down on acquiring access to technology in all spaces, in transportation and infrastructure.

So as we look to the future with hope for tomorrow. We must envision our communities electing a citizen of their peers to serve in the Legislature, and champion their local needs for school funding, municipal aid, infrastructure, and policy changes. Trusting the community to elect a

representative who will have a seat at the table, who will look like them, who will voice their interests creates a true democracy; and a true democracy involves all people.

So I know these things weigh heavily on each of you as you go through this process; but again, we're imploring you to give the weight and the merit to the diversity that sits at the table now, to the Black leaders who have come into office during a time such as this, and also to the future growth of diversity in our great State of New Jersey.

I will submit my testimony, and thank you all for allowing me to share some brief remarks.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

And I think I can speak on behalf of all of us when I say that the diversity of our state is certainly what makes us special and unique. And I believe that everyone on this Commission is committed to ensuring that we not only maintain the diversity of our state, but also create opportunities to further enhance that in the Legislature.

Thank you very much, Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you.

Madam Secretary, any other legislators here, or are we ready to go with the first person up?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, I don't see any other legislators as of now.

We do have a couple of speakers who asked to testify early -- for example, we have Christopher Scales and Christian Estevez.

MR. BARLAS: Okay. If they have time restraints, let's start there, Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Okay.

Christopher Scales.

CHRISTOPHER SCALES: Thank you so much.

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Chris Scales, and I am a resident of Hamilton in the 19th Legislative District.

I have had an opportunity to study the Turnpike and Parkway maps, as well as the Unity Map presented to the Commissioners last week. I support the Turnpike map, because it keeps Plainsboro in the 14th District where it has been situated for the past 40 years, along with Hamilton.

Our District has long been one of the most competitive districts in the state, and we meet the criteria for partisan fairness because both parties have represented the 14th Legislative District in the Senate and Assembly over the last four decades. Communities of interest remain protected by keeping Plainsboro in the 14th. It is crucial to create several Asian opportunity districts rather than pack this important constituency into one district, which would be the case with the 17th District under the Parkway map. The 14th has an Asian constituency of 20 percent with Plainsboro in it, and that population will only continue to grow.

Plainsboro needs to stay in the 14th so that the 14th can be an Asian opportunity district. The 17th under the Parkway map, or the 16th under the Turnpike map, will be an Asian opportunity district even without Plainsboro. Such opportunities for more diverse representation in Trenton makes our state stronger.

It is vital to make sure that there are opportunities for stronger representation not only for ethnic groups but also for women. And while it is true that West Windsor and Plainsboro share a school district, the two towns are quite distinct and do not have to be in the same district. West Windsor-Plainsboro School District is the number four school district in the state, despite having the two towns currently in separate legislative districts. There has been no adverse effects on the school system or communities with those two towns separated and represented by different legislators.

I thank you for listening, and appreciate you taking my testimony into account when redrawing these legislative boundaries.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Scales.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker will be Arthur Amidano, followed by Khalid Anjum.

MR. BARLAS: I'm sorry, Madam Secretary, do we need to do Mr. Estevez, or is he not here?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: He is not here yet.

MR. BARLAS: Okay, no problem.

C H R I S T I A N E S T E V E Z: I actually just got here, so if you want to do me afterwards, I can go. Sorry about that.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Okay, so then we can go to Christian Estevez.

MR. ESTEVEZ: Thank you; sorry about that. Just trying to get myself situated.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Commission once again. My name is Christian Estevez; I am the President of Latino Action Network, and we have been involved with the Fair Districts Coalition to advocate for a map that truly represents the diversity of the state. Today I will be as brief as possible, but I would like to say that we do commend both the Republicans and the Democrats for doing the work to try to draw maps that make some progress.

However, I will say that we are somewhat disappointed that neither map makes quite as much progress as we think is necessary. As you have seen from the map that we submitted, the Fair Districts Unity Map, we were able to draw 20 districts that had majority people of color, and both the Parkway and the Turnpike map both only got to 17. We think that we demonstrated that it is possible to get to more, and we ask that both parties' Commissioners sharpen their pencils and try to do better on both counts.

We also are concerned with the fact that both parties drew, in terms of Latino majority districts, only drew one each; whereas the current enacted map, the map that we're living with right now, has two districts that have Latino majority populations. In our Fair Districts map we were able to draw, I believe, four. And so to see that both maps came back with only one, we find this to be kind of regressing, going backwards, and we ask that the parties revisit this and find a way to get us to more.

And because having more Latino majority districts gives our community more opportunities to elect candidates of our community's choosing, stronger than if we were just doing populations that will be equal opportunity districts, where maybe 36 percent-- Which is not bad, but not as strong as if we had majorities. And we know how hard it is to overcome

the historic disadvantages that communities of color have suffered, and given that Latinos are severely underrepresented in the Senate and the Assembly, we think that we need to do a lot more to try to get us towards parity at the State level.

And thank you for your time.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Estevez, for your testimony today, and we really appreciate all of our public and private conversations in terms of your advocacy on this very important issue. So thank you again.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Laura Ali, followed by Arthur Amidano.

L A U R A A L I: Thank you to the Commission. I appreciate very much this opportunity.

My name is Laura Ali. For those of you who don't know me, I am the Chairwoman of the Morris County Republican Committee, and I really feel very strongly that the Turnpike map is a potential disaster to Morris County.

It's breaking us up into six potential districts, which is ridiculous; and it is against one of the goals of the Commission. And it's breaking up two existing Assemblymen that covered District 26. And I can suspect strongly that the intention of that was to come to a negotiation point where one of them perhaps stays and one of them leaves, and I strongly object to that.

Christian Barranco, our newest Assemblyman, is the only Republican Hispanic legislator in the Assembly, and he represents a good

portion -- there's a good portion of Hispanics in our District, in Parsippany, in Jefferson, in Lincoln Park; and he needs to stay. As far as Assemblyman Webber is concerned, he covers Morris Plains, which is adjacent to Parsippany. They've always been together, they're almost like one town, and that really needs to be continuous.

I feel strongly that the Democrats, because they don't beat us in the general election, are forcing unnecessary primaries now upon us where Assemblyman Webber would have to primary Assemblyman Bergen or Assemblywoman Dunn, and who knows what will happen as far as-- Oh, Christian Barranco then would be forced to primary our representatives in District 24.

So I just feel very strongly that for Morris County's future, that the Turnpike map is not representative of what it should be, and I urge the Commission to reconsider that and to use the Parkway map, the Republican map.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, ma'am. We appreciate you coming on today.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Arthur Amidano, followed by Khalid Anjum.

A R T H U R A M I D A N O, Jr.: Good evening, Judge Carchman, Chairman Jones, Chairman Barlas.

My name is Arthur Amidano, Jr. I live in West New York in Hudson County; I was born and raised in the neighboring city of Union City.

As I study the proposed maps, I am struck by how the Turnpike map splits Jersey City into three districts. The way that Jersey City is split makes no sense. It looks very haphazard and arbitrary. If Jersey City can be split into three districts, then the Commission should follow the pattern set by the 1980 to 2000 maps that maintain the 32nd Legislative District in the northern part of Jersey City. The 33rd District in Jersey City in those historical maps were enlarged or shrunk to keep population balanced.

In light of the Turnpike map splitting Jersey City into three districts, I propose a return to historical standards and making the 33rd Legislative District cover West New York, Guttenberg, Union City, Weehawken, Hoboken, and portions of Jersey City once again, as it did for at least 30 years.

North Hudson is a community of interest. It is a vibrant Hispanic area. While growing up in Union City, West New York and Weehawken were very common places to go to. Bergenline Avenue unites Union City to North Hudson. It is an extremely homogenous place. Neighbors have friends and social connections in the neighboring towns in this area. Northern Hudson County has its own fire department, the North Hudson Regional Fire and Rescue. Other organizations, like the North Hudson Community Action Corporation, which offers health services, and the North Hudson Council of Mayors, which offers Meals on Wheels to local seniors, operate around here.

The bonds that connect North Hudson together are very strong. Neither the Turnpike nor the Parkway maps reflect this. Both maps keep Union City separate from North Hudson, which in turn perpetuates the rupture in North Hudson caused by the 2010 map, when Union City was

separated from West New York and Guttenberg. The Parkway and Turnpike maps further the rupture and leave Union City as an island alone in North Hudson.

My final recommendations to the Commission are that the Parkway map should make Secaucus, North Bergen, Guttenberg, West New York, Union City, and Weehawken one compact North Hudson district; while the Turnpike map should revert to how the 1980, 1990, and 2000 maps handled Jersey City and North Hudson. All I ask is to please return a modicum of historical continuity and unity to North Hudson.

Thank you for your time.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Amidano, for your testimony this afternoon.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Khalid Anjum, followed by Karen Arakelian.

KHALID ANJUM: Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Good afternoon Judge Carchman, Chairman Jones, Chairman Barlas, Commissioner Taffet, and all the other Commissioners of the Legislative Apportionment Commission. I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity to hear from the public.

My name is Khalid Anjum, and I am a proud resident of South Brunswick and Middlesex County, and today I would like to focus my testimony on this town.

South Brunswick is a diverse town and plays a major role in hosting large cultural and religious gatherings for residents from nearby towns like Montgomery and Princeton, gathered to celebrate festivals such as

Diwali, which are hosted here in South Brunswick each year. Many of our South Brunswick and Muslim residents do not travel to celebrate holidays in Edison, because the community in South Brunswick hosts and celebrate here in town, and they actually act as a hub of Southern Middlesex County for Asian Americans and other nearby towns.

Also, South Brunswick is home to the Islamic Center of Central Jersey. The Islamic Center is one of the largest mosques and cultural centers in the area, and has been serving the community for almost 40 years. Recently, the Center was expanded, with new initiatives to build a sports facility and a multi-family housing, that will really benefit all of the communities in the neighboring towns as well, in addition to the South Middlesex County residents and their families that live in Somerset and Mercer Counties.

Many don't realize, but South Brunswick includes five incorporated communities within its township borders, and there are residents in South Brunswick who have Princeton mailing addresses, further connecting our two communities. South Brunswick's population is 49 percent Asian, and I urge the Commission not to pack the Asian community in South Brunswick by simply combining us with individuals who live in East Brunswick and Edison. While this may create an Asian plurality district, it would ultimately pack voters together and dilute the community's ability for greater opportunities for representation at the State level.

The proof is in the election results from the last November. The diverse electorate in the currently enacted 16th Legislative District played an instrumental role in recently electing Assemblywoman Sadaf Jaffer, one of the seven Asian legislators elected last year. We cannot pack diverse

communities, and we cannot undo the progressive we have all worked so hard to accomplish.

I urge you to keep South Brunswick in the current configuration of the 16th Legislative District.

And I thank you for your time and consideration, and I wish you all good luck in the Apportionment process and for the great work that you are doing.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak. Please maintain the strength and diversity of our community by leaving the 16th District intact.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Anjum.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Karen Arakelian, followed by David Calhoun.

KAREN ARAKELIAN: Hi, my name is Karen Arakelian; I live in Montville, New Jersey, which is in Morris County in LD26.

I thank you for allowing me to speak on this issue.

With the Turnpike map, I feel that LD26 is being torn apart. As its being blown up, our biggest concern -- my biggest concern -- is our wonderful Indian American community. What this does is divide the Indian American neighbors in Morris Plains and Parsippany from each other, and they have always been together.

What the map-- The division is just something that-- I just feel like if this map, if the Parkway map had this division on it, the Republicans would be called racist. It's just not a really good way to go

forward in New Jersey. We're trying to unite New Jersey, not divide New Jersey. This redistricting re-marginalizes a minority community, and that is never good.

I am quite sure that if you really look into what our Indian American community does and how they work together, you'd really want to try not to split them up. In Morris County, we already spoke about -- Laura Ali spoke about how our two Assemblymen, who are wonderful, would be split up, and not even in our District anymore. That's really not a good thing for Morris County or the people in the surrounding areas.

I thank you for letting me have a chance to just voice my opinion on this.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Arakelian.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is David Calhoun, followed by Corlies Chong.

D A V I D C A L H O U N: Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to address the Commission.

My name is David Calhoun, and I am a 35-year resident of Neptune City, with a long history of public service to my community. I have served the local Board of Education, and more recently as a member of the Borough Council. We are a small shore town of roughly 5,000 residents, and I am deeply concerned about several aspects of the proposed redistricting map, entitled *Parkway*, that has removed Neptune City from LD11 and placed it in LD30. There are a number of reasons why I believe this to be

detrimental for the residents of my town, and I would like to highlight a few of them here.

First, Neptune City is home to a small K through 8 school district, maintaining standing relationships with Neptune Township and Red Bank Regional High Schools. By placing Neptune City in LD30, and additionally moving Red Bank to LD13, parents of school-aged children in my town could be forced to approach legislative leaders in three different districts in order to advocate for their children in the upper grades, should the need arise.

As a past elected official and the father of a child on the autism spectrum, I know what is required to advocate at all levels of government, not only for my child but for every child in the district. Removing Neptune City from LD11 would make that advocacy needlessly difficult for parents of school-aged children here.

Second, Neptune City's demographics are changing. We are a working class community that is currently home to roughly 30 percent minority population -- a significant portion of which reside in many of the affordable rental units in town. We also boast a growing LGBTQ population, including three-term Councilwoman Pamela Renee. These are but two examples that demonstrate Neptune City as a community of interest, with a population more closely aligned with the residents of our neighbors in Asbury Park, Neptune Township, and the other shore towns of LD11, rather than the less inclusive communities in LD30.

Third, Neptune City is connected to the Atlantic Ocean via the Shark River, which borders one of the crown jewels of our community, Memorial Park. Our State and local elected officials, along with grassroots

environmental organizations like the Shark River Cleanup Coalition, have actively pursued efforts to improve the health of the River for many years, due to the effects of climate change. However, during the same time, neighboring Wall Township has stood in the way of remediation efforts that would stabilize the River's ecosystem, actively objecting to dredging efforts that would improve its health, and widen navigational waterways for the recreational and commercial boaters who help support our local economy.

If Neptune City is moved to LD30 and forced to share representation with the larger and more affluent Wall Township, I fear that we will not be represented fairly and equally, since the larger community has no vested interest in understanding or addressing the environmental concerns that we face as a gateway to the Shore.

In conclusion, I am skeptical that legislative leadership in LD30 will adequately represent the residents of Neptune City, given the differences in geography and the demographics of the communities involved, vastly different income levels, and explosive population growth in Lakewood that will surely demand ever-increasing levels of legislative attention over the next 10 years. One can only surmise that much of this maneuvering is being done for political gain. Neptune City will be forced into the crosshairs of a partisan fight not of our making.

If the goal of reapportionment is to make legislative districts more competitive, I submit that since Monmouth County is already heavily controlled by Republicans, LD11 is already a competitive district having only elected its first Democratic Senator in many years, in 2018. Neptune City has been part of LD11 for the last three apportionment cycles -- under both Republican and, now, Democratic leadership. It belongs exactly

where it is now, and we do not deserve to be a pawn in the game of political brinksmanship currently being played out across all levels of government.

I implore this Commission to take my concerns regarding fair and adequate representation into account before making a decision that will affect my town for the next 10 years.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Calhoun, for taking the time to be here this afternoon.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Corlies Chong, followed by Christine Clarke.

C O R L I E S C H O N G: Thank you, members of the Commission; thank you Judge Carchman, Chairman Jones and Chairman Barlas.

I am a resident of Neptune City. I have been living here for over 50 years. My comments regarding the mapping are primarily to oppose the Parkway map, and the proposal of carving out Neptune City from District 11 and reallocating it to District 30; primarily for a couple reasons.

Neptune City is surrounded geographically on the West, North, and South from Neptune Township. Neptune Township, as Mr. Calhoun had spoken about, is our sending district for the school. I attended K through 8 in Neptune City; my kids were sent, and they all went to Neptune. I think it just doesn't make a whole lot of sense to relocate the town because of that. The other areas are that there have some shared interests throughout the community that we share, and it just doesn't make a whole lot of sense to separate us at this point.

I just want to-- That's basically all I had to say. I think it makes a whole lot of sense; and Mr. Calhoun actually spoke to quite a few points, so I won't burden the Commission with those additional comments.

I thank you for your time.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, we will go now to Christine Clarke, and then Assemblywoman Angelica Jimenez.

C H R I S T I N E C L A R K E: Good afternoon Judge Carchman; Co-Chairs Jones and Barlas, and members of staff of the Apportionment Commission.

My name is Christine Clarke. I am an environmental advocate, and I am also the Municipal Chair of the Jefferson Township Democratic Committee. Jefferson Township includes the community of Lake Hopatcong, where I have lived for 17 years and am raising my four children. Lake Hopatcong isn't just our state's largest freshwater lake, it is also the name of a community that thrives on seasonal ecotourism and has businesses that are supported by keeping the lake healthy, cared for, and clean.

We need to be in a politically competitive district to protect our lake and our livelihoods. The harmful algae bloom threat has been a known problem since before I was born to these communities. Climate change and longer, warmer seasons have multiplied that threat. Our legislative representatives have been politically safe due to the partisan slant of our district for a long time, which doesn't help us. In fact, at one of our PAC's community meetings about the harmful algae blooms that shut down

the lake in 2019, our State Senator was turned to for comment, and here's (indiscernible) -- through folded arms he only said to us, "Good luck."

At the end of 2019, Governor Murphy had to step in with \$13 million for our lake. Last year, when the Biden Administration pandemic funding for states provided opportunities for sponsoring one-off projects, we benefitted from a one-time appropriation as well. But these are not long-term solutions. Our lake needs an annual appropriation, and we need representatives in Trenton who are accountable to our community and to the voters in order to get it. If we were put in a position today to have to pick a map out of the released maps, the Parkway version of District 26 is far preferable to the Turnpike version, accordingly.

Further, and separately, I would just like to add that even though the partisan slant of the district, as it's drawn, has again lead to the reelection of current representatives, and even though I don't personally agree with them on very many issues, I don't think it's fair to voters to remove them by drawing them out. Let them be beaten through fair competition for votes and debate -- or at least as fair as any challenge to any incumbent ever actually is. One of the incumbents lives in my town.

In the final maps, please keep Jefferson in a truly competitive LD26. While the redistricting task is enormous and certainly presents no lack of challenges, there are several ways the maps can be drawn to accomplish this.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Clarke.

Madam Secretary, you said Assemblywoman Jimenez?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The next speaker is Assemblywoman Angelica Jimenez, followed by Joseph Cleary.

MR. BARLAS: Assemblywoman.

A S S E M B L Y W O M A N A N G E L I C A M. J I M E N E Z:

Hi, good afternoon; thank you.

But when I registered, I just registered so I may listen.

Thank you. I didn't have anything to testify on.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, we really appreciate it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JIMENEZ: Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Joseph Cleary, followed by Aiden DeMarsey.

J O S E P H C L E A R Y: Hi, my name is Joe Cleary.

Thank you, Madam Secretary. And also thank you for the opportunity to testify to Judge Carchman, and Chair Jones and Chair Barlas, and the entire Commission.

This is a true example of democracy in our state, and I think all of us should welcome what we're doing here today in having open discussions about a very important topic.

My name is Joe Cleary. I am a lifelong resident of New Jersey. I reside in Cherry Hill, which of course is in the 6th Legislative District. However, I am a CFO for a large business in Wildwood, New Jersey, and I am very active in Cape May and with issues within the state. I have a great interest in our state and its financial future.

My testimony today is to simply request balance and fair, competitive election districts. Competitive election districts create general

elections that enfranchise the nearly one-third independent voters in our state. Uncompetitive districts do the opposite: They focus all of the attention -- and I know I'm speaking to 11 Commissioners who are way more politically savvy than I will ever be -- that focus all the attention on the individual primaries, and actions within those primaries, which generally receive a fraction of the voters that we see in November.

The reality -- which I believe everyone on this call recognizes -- is that at least 70 percent, maybe more, of the existing legislative districts are essentially uncompetitive. They are completely resolved at the primary, and that result, I believe -- I don't think that's a positive for our state, and it really disenfranchises other voters in the entire state. And what we end up with is too often polar folks -- people who are on one side or the other, which I don't believe is a value to the state.

So my request today isn't related to any individual district. I recognize and I congratulate you on issuing the two maps. You've started a lot of conversation, not only on the one or two hundred people who have signed up, but throughout our whole state.

And I will cede all the rest of my time to the next speaker.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you very much, Mr. Cleary, for coming out today.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Aiden DeMarsey, followed by Patricia Doherty.

Aiden DeMarsey is currently on mute.

Aiden DeMarsey is currently not responding. The next speaker would be Patricia Doherty.

PATRICIA DOHERTY: Good afternoon.

My name is Patricia Doherty, Research Director for NJ 11th for Change. And I am speaking on behalf of myself and our organization leadership.

Thanks for this opportunity to react to the proposed maps. However, we are frustrated that these maps appear to be drawn as an exercise in political positioning, instead of recognizing the changing racial, ethnic, and cultural communities of interest that we and many other groups have testified about as critical areas for consideration. This was meant to be an opportunity for the Commission and the public to collaborate to produce maps that would represent New Jersey fairly and responsibly. Instead, the hard work done by many concerned groups and individuals seems to have been disregarded.

NJ 11th for Change submitted previous testimony and a map we believe encompassed the significant communities of interest and regional concerns of the greater Essex-Morris area. We will also submit written testimony that identifies specific concerns with these proposed maps.

The following issues of both maps need to be addressed for our area. One: The failure to reflect the significant growth of Asian, Latino, and Black communities in LD26 and LD27. These maps do not consider Jewish, Middle Eastern, and North African populations. All are split among multiple districts. In our map, we included one each of majority Black and majority Latino districts.

Two: Both Commission maps draw LD27 to combine urban and suburban municipalities with completely different needs and

socioeconomic realities. This would serve all of the residents poorly and creates a district without focus, while endangering the most independent-minded and constituent-responsive legislators in the state.

Three: Neither map gives serious consideration to relationships between municipalities, geographical boundaries, shared municipal services, transportation, and commuter infrastructure.

Four: We see no consideration for continuity of representation in these maps, and that confuses constituents and reduces voter participation and civic engagement.

In conclusion, the map deficiencies we are calling out will harm today's voters and communities of interest, and it will only get worse over the next 10 years; because the already existing demographic changes that these maps fail to recognize will continue to occur and even accelerate. The disservice these maps do to our changing populations will be exacerbated as the years go by, in very predictable ways, long before it is time for the next redistricting. The people who will be harmed most by this are young voters who are new to political engagement and have the most at stake.

New Jersey 11th for Change has a plea for and a challenge to the Commission. The final map must represent fairly the diversity of all New Jerseyans, addressing the concerns of communities of interest, socioeconomic issues, district boundaries, and the needs and realities of the New Jersey we are in the process of becoming.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Doherty.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Matthew Duffy, followed by William Eames.

MATTHEW L. DUFFY, Esq.: Hi, my name is Matt Duffy. I am the Special Counsel for Redistricting at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice.

I want to thank you first for releasing the maps for public comment. As I said, it is wonderful for New Jersey residents to be able to participate. As Judge Carchman said, this is participatory democracy at its best. And we think both maps take some steps in the right direction, but they have things we want to see improved, too.

I will go into specifics in a moment, but I think a major concern is that both maps continue to over-represent white communities. Given New Jersey is a state that is effectively half people of color, it is only fair that New Jersey's districts be drawn so that half of them are majority people of color. But only 17 districts in both the Parkway and the Turnpike (technical interference). It's not right or fair that New Jersey's communities of color continue to be cut up and underrepresented in the Legislature, especially given the demographic changes of the last 10 years.

One thing which I didn't (technical interference) tonight, is that splitting communities of interest or minority communities of color can be good. It is not good. It is one of the fundamentally understood precepts of redistricting that putting these communities together maximizes their ability to select representatives of their choice. Another thing is both maps really appear to split up communities of interest. And we submitted 50 community of interest maps. We did hours and hours and hours of meetings with groups all over the state, to try and do the legwork to give the evidence

you need to show where people are across the state. And I encourage you to check those out and to read the stories on them, not just look at the maps, but to really see the work that went into these, and the work of the people who got them, and the people who sent them.

I know you're party actors, but Judge Carchman's criteria of January 6 listed communities of interest well before partisan considerations such as continuity of representation. I know a lot of people have talked about that tonight, but it is the community that should be able to select the representative, not the representative that should come first. We implore you to follow that criteria and to group communities of interest, particularly from growing communities of color, first; and then draw a map around them. You can do it -- we did it -- rather than consider them as an afterthought.

I have a minute left, so I am going to go into some examples of stuff we thought would be better. There's great stuff, too, and I won't put that in my written comments. But with the Turnpike map we take issue in LD1 and LD3, which splits Vineland from Millville and Bridgeton, and splits Fairfield from Bridgeton in LD5. Camden continues to be split from Pennsauken and Merchantville for a community of interest. In LD26, 27, and 40, it divides the AAPI communities among three districts -- specifically Parsippany-Troy Hills, Livingston, and Millburn. There was a lot of work that was done to sort of go and map out and talk to a lot of people and show that this is a real community of interest.

In the Parkway map, things that can be improved: It splits Neptune City from Neptune, which was discussed already; splits North Brunswick and Franklin from New Brunswick; splits North Plainfield from

Plainfield; splits Morristown from Dover, Wharton, and Mine Hill; splits Parsippany-Troy Hills from Livingston and Millburn's AAPI community.

Please -- we have all these maps, start with the maps of where people said their communities are. It's a really great place to start from.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Duffy.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is William Eames, followed by Larry Fox.

WILLIAM EAMES: Hi, Commission members, I appreciate it -- and Judge Carchman -- for the opportunity to speak and to address these issues.

I live in Morris County, I have been a lifelong resident here. Ten years ago, I ran for State Senate from District 27. So through all of that activity, I am quite familiar with the mixture of ethnic groups, the diversity of folks, the communities of interest, the way people circulate, the way they attend church -- my church is very diverse, it's in the middle of District 26. And in this immediate area of Morris County, particularly the Turnpike map, it looks like it is chopping and slicing and dicing out of vindictiveness rather than out of any connection of the way people live, and behave, and work, and live together.

And I'm very concerned about that. This does not continue the kind of contact that we have, whether it be within school districts, whether it be within churches, whether it be the way we shop or the way we have recreational programs. Instead, it cuts that into a sliced pie that is very disruptive, and certainly doesn't continue the representation that folks

have remembered and that they have grown used to, regardless of the personalities of who is filling that seat.

So I'm very concerned that, particularly in the Morris County area, we've got seven districts now trying to fit into a geography where the original goal was to try and keep counties together to try and build compact districts that were reflective of the relationships that people have, and the way they live and the way they travel.

We just elected a Cuban American, as an example, in Legislative District 26. In that same vicinity we have a huge Indian American community that spans from Parsippany to Morris Plains -- it's being chopped in half. The Florham Park area would be extended up to Franklin Lakes. There's no continuity of interest, there's no connections, there are no travel connections in that area. It makes no sense whatsoever in the way the Turnpike map was drawn.

The same kind of thing happens with Parsippany, where all of a sudden it gets connected with Mahwah to the north. That's not a travel pattern, or a community pattern, or a pattern of behavior that people have.

So I would very much encourage you to look heavily at the Morris County area. We can provide much more information about it, but you need to pay attention to the way people live and the way they work; and not so much to particular colors or groups or numbers, but the way people work together and live together. Our goal here is to be New Jerseyans and Americans, not to be Black versus Indian versus something else.

So please take a hard look at Morris County. It's been terribly chopped up.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Eames.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Larry Fox, followed by Sandra Galdamez.

MAYOR LARRY FOX: Good afternoon; my name is Larry Fox. I am the Mayor of Bradley Beach, a 4,200-person community in Monmouth County.

Thanks to the Commissioners for this hearing and your hard work on this important topic. I am here to advocate for the Turnpike map that is being proposed. Bradley Beach has coastline interests and aligns well with Long Branch and Asbury Park. We share a close economic corridor with Asbury Park.

There's about a 23 percent minority population, including 16 percent Latino communities of interest shared with Asbury Park, Long Branch, Red Bank, and Neptune. Our community, in the last Census, has grown to almost 19 percent Latino population -- over 800 of our total 4,200 people, of our residents. Our elementary school has 65 percent of students representing the Latino population. Many of our residents worship at Our Lady of Mount Caramel Church in Asbury Park.

We are a very inclusive community, and we have an affinity to our northern neighbors in Asbury Park and Long Branch. We are blessed with many small businesses that dominate our downtown -- again, similar to Asbury Park, Long Branch, and Red Bank. We're sustained by summer tourism -- again, that similarity with our coastal neighbors. Also, many years ago we were actually a part of Neptune Township before we broke

off in the later part of the 1800s. Our sending schools for high school are in Neptune and Asbury Park.

We were in Legislative District 11 the last cycle, and we'd like to return to it. From a transportation standpoint, State Highway 71 -- which is our Main Street -- is shared and ties us with Asbury, Deal, Long Branch, as does the New Jersey Coastline Train.

So I urge you to strongly consider the Turnpike map. Our affinity really is to our northern neighbors. We certainly appreciate our southern and western neighbors, but our continuity of interest is really more on the shoreline, so we would urge you to consider the Turnpike map.

Thank you for your consideration.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mayor. I appreciate you coming out today.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Sandra Galdamez, followed by Liz Glynn.

It looks like Sandra Galdamez dropped off. The next speaker is Liz Glynn.

L I Z G L Y N N: Thank you.

My name is Liz Glynn; I am the Director of Organizing with New Jersey Citizen Action.

First, thank you, Commissioners, for holding this Public Hearing. I applaud the Commission for releasing the draft maps and for holding this Hearing to take public comments. I also thank the Commission for setting up an additional meeting, since there was such great interest in providing public testimony. This is such a vast improvement in our

transparency and public engagement, and I appreciate working towards making this a more democratic process.

I am here to voice concerns regarding splitting up communities of interest. That's done in both maps -- both maps only create 17 districts where diverse communities make up the majority of our population. We should strive for 20 to reflect the population changes in our state, which demonstrated, in the last Census, Latino communities represent over 20 percent of New Jersey's population; and yet the proposed maps do not reflect that growth. Black communities represent 15 percent of our population, yet we only draw one single Black majority district.

Our AAPI communities are the fastest-growing demographic in the state and represent 10 percent of our population. The Turnpike map does not have a single Asian plurality district. The Parkway map does include an Asian plurality district, but it splits Asian communities of interest in Central New Jersey. Additionally, there are a number of communities of interest that have testified during these hearings and have communicated that their connecting communities have similar concerns and interests. The Fair Districts Coalition put together a map, they used a representable program, and that outlines many specific communities of interest. I recommend the Commission revisit this document to familiarize themselves.

The Parkway has done a better job of keeping some of these communities together, but still both of these maps need vast improvements. A lot of other groups have listed these -- and I'm not going to say a full list here -- but just to know Latino communities of Vineland, Millville, Bridgeton, Fairfield should be kept together; Latino communities in

Monmouth County should be kept together -- that's Long Branch, Asbury Park, Neptune, Neptune City, Belmar, Red Bank and Freehold. The Morristown area Latino community should be kept together -- that's Morristown, Morris Plains, Dover, Wharton, and Mine Hill. Latino communities of Plainfield and North Plainfield. The Mercer-area AAPI communities of interest should be kept together, rather than being chopped up -- that's the Windsors, Plainsboro, Princeton, Hillsboro, Montgomery, Robbinsville, and Cranbury. And the South Asian community should be kept together in the Parsippany area, and Camden and Pennsauken should be kept together in Clifton and Passaic.

In closing, again we're pleased to see the Commission hold these open public hearings after releasing draft maps. But we urge some of these big improvements, especially with keeping these communities of interest together.

We look forward to seeing an improved map. And again, thanks for taking public comment.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Glynn, for taking the time to be here today.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Joseph Hendershot, followed by Phil Hensley.

J O S E P H H E N D E R S H O T: Hi, my name is Joseph Hendershot; I am with the New Jersey League of Conservation Voters.

I want to start by thanking the Commission for hosting this Public Hearing, and agreeing to host 10 public hearings in total; as well as releasing the maps early, before the final meeting, to allow for public

comment. I would also like to highlight what Liz said about the extra meeting later on in the week. Great to increase turnout to these things.

I am here to respond to the released maps, Turnpike and Parkway, and how they affect the state. So 45.4 percent of New Jersey's Black population is located within three counties -- Essex, Union, and Camden. Currently, the Turnpike and Parkway maps have only one majority Black district; that doesn't quite work. The Commission needs to draw more majority Black districts to ensure that Black residents, who historically and consistently face issues of suppression of their political voices, can address their issues. And of course these issues range from the extreme segregation of our school districts, to the disproportionate impacts of environmental issues that will only increasingly grow in the coming years.

But luckily for us all, the Unity Map put forward by the Fair District Coalition, which centers this issue of racial justice, exists. This map does a better job than both of the recently proposed maps at keeping communities of interest together.

But, again, thank you for your time.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Hendershot, for your brief and succinct testimony this afternoon.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Phillip Hensley, followed by Rosa Herrero.

MR. BARLAS: Mr. Hensley.

PHILLIP HENSLEY: Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Good afternoon Chairman Barlas, Chairman Jones, Judge Carchman, and members of the Commission.

My name is Phillip Hensley, I am here on behalf of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey and the Fair Districts New Jersey Coalition. As others have said, I want to thank the Commission for releasing these two map proposals to the public. This is what redistricting should be about -- an open, deliberative process with meaningful opportunities for public participation.

The long list of folks who signed up to testify today and during the overflow hearing on Friday clearly demonstrate that the public wishes to be heard on these maps. And we urge the Commission to schedule more opportunities for public comment to accommodate that, including potentially a public comment portal on its website to allow for more feedback as you deliberate.

The Fair Districts New Jersey Coalition believes redistricting should be transparent, community-driven, and fair. And our Coalition's Unity Map -- which you're heard about already this afternoon and which we submitted to the Commission at its most recent hearing -- demonstrates one way to redraw district lines, in line with those principles. We believe maps should prioritize communities of interest and not incumbent protection.

In comparison, both the proposed maps, Turnpike and Parkway, fall short in different ways. Both draft maps have 17 majority-minority districts out of 40, representing 42.5 percent of the total, even though the 2020 Census says communities of color make up over 48 percent of the state's population. By contrast, the Fair Districts Unity Map draws 20 majority people of color districts, which is more reflective of the state's growth.

Although Latinos make up over 20 percent of the state's population, the Turnpike and Parkway maps fall short in terms of Latino majority districts; and, as you heard, both maps only draw one majority Black district, while the Fair Districts Unity Map draws three; more in line with the fact that the Black population has grown to over 15 percent of the state's population.

Additionally, the Asian community is the fastest-growing demographic in New Jersey. Most glaringly, the Turnpike map does not have a single Asian plurality district, even though Asians are now over 10 percent of the state's population. The Parkway map does include an Asian plurality district, District 17, which deserves to be recognized. Unfortunately, it simultaneously splits some of the Asian communities of interest in Central New Jersey that have been identified through community mapping sessions. So drawing maps is also a matter of listening to communities, ensuring that areas with shared interests are not divided up unnecessarily. And the Fair Districts New Jersey Coalition, with our partners, held these community mapping sessions across the state. We submitted these community of interest maps to the Commission in addition to our legislative map.

Both of the Commissioners' map proposals can and should do a better job of incorporating that community of interest testimony, and there are many examples you have already heard. The Parkway map splits a total of 35 communities of interest across two or more district, and the Turnpike map splits a total of 37 communities of interest across two or more districts. While some of these splits are unavoidable, we do urge the Commissioners to listen to those who have testified today and at prior

hearings, and to reduce the number of communities that are split in your final maps.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Hensley.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Rosa Herrero, followed by Tala Ismail.

R O S A H E R R E R O: Good afternoon, honorable Commissioners; thank you for the opportunity.

My name, as she said, is Rosa Herrero. I am from Ocean County, here in New Jersey for 57 years, and in Ocean County for 54 years. I am a volunteer activist with Working Together for New Jersey Election Integrity, and Look Ahead America.

A little bit about myself first and how it relates. I originally immigrated to America in 1962 with a refugee status. I endured and escaped my original birth country and repressive Castro's Cuban Communist regime. My family, relatives, and friends escaped as well, because we were seeking freedoms -- freedom of speech, individual liberty, private property ownership, and economic opportunity; (indiscernible) by a totalitarian regime, a centralized regime that was strangling us and continues to do so to this day. Unfortunately, for those remaining under the boot of that repressive government, there are no elections there -- only tyrants, supported by a police state, that decide for the citizens. It has proven to be a miserable failure after 63 years in power.

Therefore, due to my background and that experience, I have made it a point to seriously take my duty to vote and elect the best

candidates possible in order to sustain our forefathers' American dream of a constitutional republic.

After several years and going through the long, arduous naturalization process, I proudly became an American citizen. Since then, I proudly exercise my right to vote without fail in each election because I want to contribute to this magnificent country and give back. Article II, paragraph 3 of the New Jersey Constitution states, "Every citizen of the U.S.A. shall be entitled to vote." So only citizens should be counted in the drawing of district lines -- period.

All citizens want the same thing: Good schools for our kids; a good job; a safe community; and the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That is not a partisan consideration. And if it is, it would seem that many minority citizens have not been well-served by the political leadership of their cities for decades in New Jersey. Trying to represent every ethnic and racial community proportionally is impossible and leads to gerrymandering.

For example, it is a contradiction that one newly elected Morris County Hispanic Representative Christian Barranco -- permit me please -- has to actually be redistricted out of his seat. He got elected by a County that has never previously had a Hispanic representative. And for the past 20 years or so, the redistricting map has been favoring the Democratic Party. I say neither one should be honored. We need to have *fair*.

And lastly, I want to just say that in Reynolds v. Sims, the court ruled that the equal protection clause of the United States Constitution be no less than substantially equal State Legislative representation for all voting citizens of all places, as well as all races.

And I say that I've been here, as I said to you, since 1962 and have basically never encountered any problems in discrimination. And I voted, and I've been considered that I am a person of Hispanic ethnicity.

So I wanted to thank you very much for listening and permitting me to finish my statement.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Herrero, for your testimony.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Tala Ismail, followed by Emma Mammano.

T A L A I S M A I L: Good evening. My name is Tala Ismail. I am an aspiring attorney from Essex County, born and raised in Bloomfield.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on your draft maps, Turnpike and Parkway, and the impacts to my community. I also want to thank you for the increased transparency and release of these maps.

I led the Palestinian American Community Center's Census work in 2020 as their Civic Engagement Coordinator. We have submitted our community of interest map, which encompasses 6 counties and 25 cities across the state. 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, 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.

The community of interest map we submitted for Monmouth County, for example, groups Middletown and Holmdel together. This community is divided in both the Turnpike and Parkway maps. However, at Holmdel and Colts Neck Township, we respectfully ask that you consider keeping Middletown and Holmdel together. Keeping Middletown and Holmdel together would give the Arab American community of New Jersey the opportunity to have representation at the local level.

This is why I am here. I want to endorse the Unity Map presented by Fair District New Jersey. Fair District New Jersey has worked with the Palestinian American Community Center to map Arab American communities throughout the state, and other communities of color that also need representation. PACC has worked closely with the community leaders throughout the state to map our community, and provided that information to you. We have highlighted six counties with significant Arab populations, including Passaic, Hudson, Bergen, Essex, Middlesex, and Monmouth Counties.

In Essex County, both Turnpike and Parkway do a very good job with keeping Nutley and Bloomfield together, but both maps need work to ensure all communities have equitable representation.

Thank you so much for this opportunity.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Ismail.

Madam Secretary.

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

F E D A H M O H A M M E D: Good afternoon, Commission. My name is Fedah Mohammed, and I am here on behalf of the Palestinian American Community Center and the Fair Districts New Jersey.

I would just like to take a moment to thank the Commission for the opportunity to provide feedback on your draft maps of Turnpike and Parkway, and its impact to my community. This would not be possible without the Commission's commitment to transparency and releasing the maps early, so thank you.

PACC has been working with Arab community leaders from across the state to map all significant communities with Arab American populations. We have identified 25 cities and townships in 6 counties with significant populations and economic contributions. These maps have been submitted to the Commission, and are part of the Unity Map presented by Fair Districts New Jersey.

In our community of interest map, for Middlesex County, we mapped Piscataway, New Brunswick, East Brunswick, Sayreville, and Old Bridge together. Turnpike map splits our community of interest by mapping Old Bridge with Manalapan, Millstone to the south. If you keep Sayreville, South River, and East Brunswick with Old Bridge, that would support the Arab American community of New Jersey. We understand that our community of interest map is larger than a district, but a natural breaking point is between New Brunswick and Piscataway. The Parkway map does a better job at keeping Old Bridge and East Brunswick together, but please consider also adding Sayreville. Our community of interest map has been included in the Unity Map presented by Fair Districts New Jersey, and I hope the Commission takes it into consideration when redrawing our district maps.

PACC and the Fair Districts New Jersey Coalition have presented our data and findings about my community, and I truly hope you take it into consideration, as both the Turnpike and Parkway ultimately fail to reflect the rapid population growth driven solely by increases in the number of people of color.

Thank you again.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you for testifying this afternoon, Ms. Mohammed, we really appreciate you taking the time to be here.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Rania Mustafa, followed by Layla Odeh.

RANIA MUSTAFA: Hi, good afternoon, I hope you're all doing well.

Thank you very much to the Commission for the opportunity to testify again today.

My name is Rania Mustafa, and I am here on behalf of my Arab American Community, and as the Executive Director of the Palestinian American Community Center, PACC for short.

I want to start off by thanking the Commission for giving the Fair Districts Committee the opportunity to present our community of interest map last meeting, and for the Commission's commitment to transparency by releasing their draft maps early. I know it hasn't been an easy process, but we really do appreciate the transparency and the opportunity to provide feedback. This, in the end of the day, is really what this process is all about and the way we can get to the most equitable map.

I am here today to provide feedback, specifically on your draft maps of Turnpike and Parkway, and how they impact the Arab American community-of-interest maps that we proposed before the Commission. Both proposed maps -- Turnpike and Parkway -- fail to fully account for the growth of Latino, Black, and Asian communities. PACC submitted a community of interest map that encompasses 6 counties and 25 cities.

In our Hudson County of interest map, Turnpike is heavily gerrymandered by having Jersey City be a part of the winding district into the west and northern counties, isolating Jersey City. Consider enlarging the area around Jersey City to include a Marion section and West Side to the south, and Communipaw and Colgate to the east. The Parkway map is similar to the Turnpike map, as it isolates Jersey City. A small section of Jersey City is combined with cities to the north and west, cutting our community of interest, which extends to the east. Please consider modifying the Parkway map by enlarging the area around Jersey City to include a Marion section and West Side to the south, and Communipaw and Colgate Center to the east.

Both Turnpike and Parkway maps cut this packed COI by cutting out Union City from the north part of the county. Consider keeping Union City with West New York, Guttenberg, and New Durham. The Commission is our only opportunity to be recognized as a significant population in New Jersey and receive adequate representation. We've testified several times before about how specifically the Arab community is not accounted for in the data, since the census does not count us, just considers us as white.

Now that we are effectively a state that is half people of color, it is only fair that New Jersey's districts be drawn so that half of them -- 20 out of 40 -- are majority people of color. However, only 17 districts out of 20 in both Parkway and Turnpike have majority people of color. PACC endorses the Unity Map that Fair Districts New Jersey has presented to the Commission. Taking the Fair Districts New Jersey Unity Map into consideration will ensure that racial equity and inclusion of diverse communities are considered and represented at the State level.

Thank you so much for your time and attention today. Both maps must do a better job incorporating community of interest feedback received at these public hearings, and I thank you all for your time today.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you again for testifying, Ms. Mustafa.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Layla Odeh, followed by Raed Odeh.

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. I am also a college student at Montclair State University.

As the lead Get Out the Vote organizer at PACC, I know firsthand how important it is for my community to engage in all democracy work, including redistricting. That is why I am here today to endorse the Unity Map that Fair Districts New Jersey has presented to the Commission.

I also want to thank the Commission for its commitment to transparency by listening to the community and releasing these draft maps early. I am here to provide feedback on your draft maps of Turnpike and Parkway, and its impact to the Arab American community of Bergen County, New Jersey.

PACC has worked with community leaders across the state to present to the Commission a statewide map that encompasses 6 counties and 25 cities with significant Arab populations. Please consider this map when redrafting Turnpike and Parkway. In the Bergen County community-of-interest maps you presented, both the Turnpike and Parkway maps do a decent job by keeping Cliffside Park and Fairview together, but you cut Ridgefield and Ridgefield Park in both maps. Please consider keeping these two cities, Ridgefield and Ridgefield Park, together with Cliffside Park and Fairview. Both Turnpike and Parkway maps do a decent job of also keeping our community of interest of West Bergen County whole. But please consider adding Elmwood Park to either or both to keep Arab populations together.

Another map suggestion we have for our community of interest is to also add Pompton Lakes to Wayne and the Passaic County community of interest. By keeping my community together as a voting block, we will ensure we can elect a candidate of our choosing to better serve our needs in Trenton.

I urge you to consider the Fair Districts Unity Map to ensure all communities of color can have representation.

Thank you for your time.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you very much, Ms. Odeh.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Raed Odeh, followed by Adrian Orozco.

R A E D O D E H: Hello. I want to thank the Commission for the opportunity to testify. I would also like to thank you for the release of the draft map before the hearing.

My name is Raed Odeh. I am a proud business owner in Patterson, and I am here on behalf of my Arab American community and the Palestinian American Community Center, known as PACC. I am a trusted leader within my community, and I am very well-connected. I am here to support the community-of-interest map presented by PACC and the Fair Districts New Jersey Unity Map.

We have worked with community leaders across the state to map the most significant Arab population. We have found that 6 counties and 25 cities in New Jersey have the most significant Arab population, and we have submitted this map to the Commission. Both proposed maps from the Commission (indiscernible) Latino and the Black community, and *miss* Middle Eastern and North African -- let me repeat this again -- and miss Middle Eastern and North African. Let me repeat this for the third time: *Miss* Middle Eastern and North African populations.

(technical interference) Both maps also fail (indiscernible) the growth of majority Black districts. Middle Eastern and North African communities in northern New Jersey are split among multiple districts. This will continue to disenfranchise my community. The Parkway map keeps Patterson whole with Haledon and North Haledon, which is great for my

community; but Parkway continues to disenfranchise other communities of color, and it still needs work.

If you modify the Parkway map and include Woodland Park and a third of Hawthorne in the district, it would help the Arab community of interest. The Turnpike map cuts off the (indiscernible) with large Arab population to the south, and needs work.

I hope you take the map built by PACC and the Fair Districts New Jersey into consideration so that we may get representation needed through the State government. If you (indiscernible) drove through downtown Patterson, all the way through downtown Clifton, that is almost 20 minutes of a drive -- 5 miles. Sixty-five percent of the population, 65 percent of the people who own those businesses, own those buildings, or reside in those apartments, are from Middle Eastern background. So we deserve (indiscernible), we deserve more representation locally and also in a governmental body.

Thank you for hearing me.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you Mr. Odeh for participating this afternoon.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Adrian Orozco, followed by Pamela Renee.

A D R I A N O R O Z C O: Good afternoon, my name is Adrian Orozco, and I am here to testify to this Committee about my community.

I am a political organizer for Service Employees International Union, Local 32BJ. I live in LD28. This District covers

Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, Irvington, Nutley, and a portion of Newark. It is important to understand that these five municipalities fit well together.

We have public transportation and shared routes that connect the district. This District is a diverse majority minority district; African Americans and Latinos make up the majority of the district. Our representation is indicative of our diversity, and I feel we are appropriately represented. Our District has healthcare facilities, community programs like food pantries, immigration services, churches, grocery stores, and other community programs that serve residents of the district.

Although I am 24, I intend to have a family and raise them in this District. I am advocating for fair districts across New Jersey. I urge this Commission and the tiebreaker to really think about how unfair districts will affect the rest of the state.

Your certified map will shape the next 10 years of policy in New Jersey. Minorities make up 48 percent of the state's population, which is a significant increase from the previous census cycle. But those are the documented numbers. I would like to draw attention to the fact that the Census Bureau released a statement on August of 2021, indicating that due to the rewording of questions on race and ethnicity, they are confident that the numbers will reflect differently from previous years due to new wording. To me, that indicates that 48 percent is not the true number, but an under-representation. It's highly possible that those numbers are higher due to the previous wording (indiscernible) a true count.

I want to thank the Commission for this opportunity, and I'd also like to note that my colleague Sandra Galdamez was called earlier; she fell out of the meeting, but now she's back.

Thanks.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Orozco.

And on behalf of myself and Chairman Jones, we appreciate your commitment to staying in Essex County.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Pamela Renee, followed by Karol Ruiz.

P A M E L A R E N E E: Hello, thank you; my name is Councilwoman Pamela Renee from Neptune City, and I just want to thank Judge Carchman and all of you esteemed Commissioners for having this open public dialogue, and for all of your time and involvement in this important issue. I don't envy you; I'm sure it's very, very difficult.

But I am here to say that I highly oppose the Parkway map. It is very, very unfair for the residents of Neptune City. I was elected in 2014 as the first Democrat to hold a seat in 20 years in Neptune City, and I am also the first openly LGBTQ member of the governing body, and the longest serving member of our governing body.

We have a 30 percent minority district in Neptune City. We're a small town -- less than 5,000 people -- and it just-- The Parkway map isn't adequately portraying our towns. It doesn't list Bradley Beach, Avon, Belmar, Lake Como, and it doesn't adequately depict how Neptune City is somewhat like a hole in the donut of Neptune Township. And we have many, many shared services with Neptune Township, and we're very, very cohesive with Neptune Township, Asbury Park, Bradley Beach, Red Bank. We recently, in the past few years, have elected LGBTQ governing body members, and we just share a cohesiveness, a continuity of interests.

And by splitting us up like that -- especially with Wall Township and the more affluent communities -- I just don't think that our residents will be heard and our interests will be taken into account at all. It would be very, very unfair.

The Turnpike map, on the other hand -- as far as our area is concerned -- keeps that continuity between our towns. We have shared interests. Our voices would be heard better. Recently, Neptune City, for the past few years, has been going back and forth with elections, between 1 to 30 votes either way. So we're really just starting to be fair and competitive, election-wise. If you place us into Legislative District 30, that just pretty much goes all out the window and the residents in our town just will not be heard. And I think that would be a shame for our residents.

I concur with the previous Neptune City residents, David Calhoun and Corlies Chong, with their sentiments -- and also Belmar Mayor Larry Fox and his sentiments also. I just think that what they had said -- I just actually duplicate what they say.

So thank you for your time, and I really, really appreciate that you are hearing our testimonies today.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Councilwoman, for making the time to be here this evening.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Karol Ruiz, followed by Elizabeth Martin.

KAROL RUIZ: Karol Ruiz, Wind of the Spirit. We are a faith-based, nonpartisan human rights advocacy organization and immigrant resource

center. Our three community centers are located in Morristown, Dover, and Madison in Morris County.

From a place of deep faith in the collective power of New Jersey's marginalized communities, I share with you the collective sentiment of our organization's members, that these Legislative Apportionment Hearings have been a prayer -- and a prayer answered. I cannot thank this body enough for listening to our prayers -- for justice, for inclusion, for fair representation.

Our organization's members are deeply disappointed by the press coverage, and some of the testimony, presenting this process and the proposed maps as a simplistic Republican vs. Democrat power mapping process. Today, during this hearing, one of my neighbors in Morris County even referred to one of the maps as "the Republican map," lamenting that this map would force -- or the other map, I guess, the Democrat map -- would force primary contests.

The majority of Morris County residents, and we, the members of Wind of the Spirit, welcome and celebrate primary contests. While we are a nonpartisan organization, individual Wind of the Spirit members have a variety of political affiliations. Some of us are Democrats, some of us are Republican; some of us migrated to the United States fleeing right-wing dictatorships, and others migrated fleeing left-wing dictatorships. Some of us are issue-based voters -- we vote on immigration or maybe some other moral issues. Others vote down the notorious line, unique to New Jersey, with the party. Some of us are registered as Green Party members, or members of the New Jersey Democratic Socialists of America party.

But this process cannot be about the Democrat or Republican party in New Jersey. Some of us here at Wind of the Spirit cannot even vote at all because Federal laws have inhumanely blocked us from the path to citizenship; and of course, if we're not citizens here in New Jersey, we can't vote -- although that's not true everywhere. Many of us have been repeatedly ignored by our legislators in LD25, LD26, and LD27 over the past 10 years. And the most egregious example is former LD25 Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll, who was quoted -- quoted -- spewing racist and nativist vitriol in a district with a beautiful and vibrant Black and immigrant community. That legislator was safe in his seat for 24 years.

This has to be about repairing that harm. This process has to be about *us*, about the people, not about the parties. This process must keep Dover and Morristown together. We are sister communities with community centers in both communities. So please, I urge you, to go back and make maps that fairly represent us and that keep Dover and Morristown together.

I'm not sure if that bell means I'm out of time, but until I'm told I'll keep going.

MR. BARLAS: You are, Ms. Ruiz.

MS. RUIZ: Okay; thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you very much for your impassioned testimony this evening, we sincerely appreciate it.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Elizabeth Martin, followed by Sandra Galdamez.

E L I Z A B E T H M A R T I N: Good afternoon, members of the New Jersey Reapportionment Commission, Chairman Jones, and Chairman Barlas.

My name is Elizabeth Martin, and I am a Senior Speech Language Pathology and Audiology major at Towson University in Towson, Maryland. I am here today in my capacity as a Youth Member of the NAACP, where I have been a member for almost seven years, beginning with the Camden County East Youth Council.

I testify today in support of the Unity Map proposed by the Fair Districts Coalition, as does the State Convention NAACP. I am a member of the Camden, Pennsauken, and Merchantville community. Currently, Pennsauken and Merchantville are in the 6th Legislative District and Camden is in the 5th. At 21 years old I am a lifelong resident of Pennsauken, but my family has lived there for over 33 years.

I am a member of Kaign Avenue Baptist Church in Camden, New Jersey, where, when hitting no red lights, I can get to my church in nine minutes. I often spend time there volunteering in the clothing and food pantry. I have also spent time as a teacher in vacation bible school during the summer, which services children from the Camden, Pennsauken, and Merchantville area. A lot of my Muslim peers who live in Pennsauken, Merchantville -- in that area -- worship in Camden with the several (indiscernible) there and Lawnside, which is also in the 5th District. I have also volunteered at Cooper University Hospital, where people in my community often go for inpatient and outpatient needs.

Pennsauken borders Camden and Merchantville. I often find myself driving through all three cities on simple trips like going to the mall, getting gas, accessing food or groceries, and engaging with friends.

There is a lot of overlap in these communities when it comes to spending, recreation, and community engagement. Pennsauken was able to survive because the job market is in Camden.

What has happened over several decades is the new generations of Camden residents have established themselves in Pennsauken. Many residents of the City of Camden attend Camden County Vocational Schools, which has a campus in Pennsauken. And in addition, many people in my community attend the colleges located in Camden.

I ask that you choose the map that includes Pennsauken and Merchantville in the same legislative district as Camden. If not, my community will be split into two districts. I urge this Commission to draw a racially equitable State Legislative map; and lend my support to the Fair Districts Unit map recently released by the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice and other New Jersey Advocacy groups, which I feel does a better job than both released maps at keeping communities of interest together.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Martin.

And I've just got to say, on behalf of all of us -- we've said it a few times -- that the effort that your folks at the Youth NAACP Chapter throughout the state have made to be a part of these hearings, all throughout the state, either in person or virtually -- it's a testament to you guys' commitment to democracy and this process. And we can't applaud you guys enough for all the work that you've been doing to be a part of this. So job well done.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you so much.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Sandra Galdamez, followed by Aiden DeMarsey.

S A N D R A G A L D A M E Z: Good evening, Commissioner members, and thank you for allowing me to testify on my community.

As you know, the Commission has a responsibility to draw legislative district lines and to depict fair and competitive districts. When reviewing the data and collaborating on the new district lines, I ask that you remember to maintain community of interests in the districts throughout the state. Disrupting communities of interest can have several negative impacts on residents. Keeping these communities together is vital to these communities, which will aid in the New Jersey economy.

I am a Latina living in the District 22 -- Legislative District. I am also a member of Service Employees of International Union 32BJ. I stand here today showing this Commission that I am proof there is a growing minority population in this state -- more specifically, District 22.

I left El Salvador in 1993. I was sponsored by my mother who was living here in the U.S.A, a permanent resident. I am now currently living in the District with two American-born daughters, and I am currently expecting a third child. I would like to highlight that I am raising my family alone, as my husband was deported back in 1992. I mention this because even though immigrant services can be found within that District, it could use additional resources.

Currently, Latinos make up 33.95 percent of the minority population. This is significant. It shows that not only is the minority population within the District growing, but Latinos are choosing to live here

in the District. If you follow the data trends, it all indicates that this number will continue to grow. The District represents 10 municipalities. We are now connected to part of the District via various roadways.

Our District's diversity is reflected in religious houses of worship such as temples, Baptist, and Methodist churches, and nondenominational churches.

District 22 has a sense of community, where organizations like the YMCA, Catholic Charities and other organizations that give back to the community. This is possible because of current resources being invested in the district.

I urge this Commission to choose the map within the District, One Person One Vote. This type of map reflects an equal breakdown of the demographics across the state. Furthermore, I am asking the Commission to consider that there's a minority in this district that has not been properly identified.

The following is a direct excerpt from the Census government website: "We are confident the differences in overall racial distributions are largely due to improvements in the design of the two separate questions for race data collection and processing, as well as some demographic changes over the past years." The Census 2021, released.

I (indiscernible) possess this ability to listen to public input, one of the (technical interference) the consequence and (indiscernible) and fair commissions and numerous public hearings. Releasing the map prior to certification and having one more public hearing, residents can give feedback to the Commission.

I want to thank the Commission for their time and allowing me to speak. This redistricting process was founded on transparency and public input. (indiscernible) striving by the consensus of New Jersey voters. In a fair Commission, it is (indiscernible) public hearing that has (indiscernible) to the goal.

I want to thank you, Commission, for your time and allowing me to speak.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Galdamez, for being here this evening to testify.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Aiden DeMarsey, followed by Anthony Salters.

Aiden DeMarsey -- we'll have to come back at the end. Anthony Salters, and I am told that Senator Kean, is in the waiting room.

A N T H O N Y S A L T E R S: Good afternoon, Chairman Jones, Mr. Carchman, Commission members, staff, Hillside residents, and everyone on the call who can be seen, and unseen.

On behalf of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity, I would also like to recognize the distinguished ladies of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., and the NAACP for having a watch party which is bringing thousands of people into view for this proceeding. And also my fellow Divine Nine brothers and sisters.

I am Anthony Salters, and I am a Hillside resident, and a district leader. Hillside is currently in LD20, which has three other municipalities -- Elizabeth, Roselle, and Union. Let me be clear: Hillside is

better off remaining in LD20. Hillside is a predominantly Black community. Ten years ago, Hillside was the only Union County town in LD29. Hillside was regulated, basically as an afterthought, to receiving Federal, State, and County aid due to being grouped with all other Essex County towns.

In the past 10 years since Hillside has been in LD20, we have seen our financial aid and resources significantly increase at the State and County levels. The increases are reflected in our public school system and township budgets. Being in LD20 afforded Hillside the respect that could no longer be ignored, and to be in a Legislative district of four towns where we could not be neglected or shortchanged by government. And if we were, the shortchange was glaring. Our services have improved. Over the past 10 years, Hillside residents have ascended to department heads of County government. We have a Commissioner from Hillside, formerly known as the Union County Freeholder Board, and prior to that Hillside did not have a person from Hillside on the Freeholder Board up until 2018 -- since 1977.

We have residents who have influential positions at the Union County-based Kean University and Union County College. These positions were virtually unattainable for Hillside residents and minorities 15 years ago. We have programs, and pilot programs, and partnerships with Kean University and the Hillside Board of Education. The current President of Kean University, Lamont Repollet, is the first Black President, but make no mistake -- he was the most qualified, but he is also a true reflection of the District.

Now, in 2022, phylogeny recapitulates phylogeny. In simpler terms: History repeats itself. Now it is proposed that Hillside move

into District LD 27. By moving us, you again make Hillside an afterthought. It's the textbook definition of gerrymandering. Putting Hillside in a district with our border neighbor Irvington is the textbook definition of packing. And by replacing Hillside in LD20 with our friends from Kenilworth, it's the textbook definition of cracking, because the move drastically alters the racial composition of LD20 to be much less minority and much less Black.

The gains and progress to what is possible for a Black political candidate will be set back for 10 years, and the gains made will be on a time clock to be dismantled.

In conclusion, again we respectfully request reconsideration for Hillside to remain in LD20.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Salters, for testifying this evening.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Amman Seehra, followed by Sukhvir Singh.

A M M A N S E E H R A: Hi everybody. I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Amman Seehra, and I am the Vice Chair of the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, or SALDEF; and a member of the Fair Districts Coalition.

More importantly, I am here as a Robbinsville resident for the past 11 years, who was born and raised in Hamilton, New Jersey, and has a deep understanding and connection to our AAPI and other minority communities throughout New Jersey.

The 2020 Census established AAPI voters as the fastest-growing ethnic group in New Jersey. Our ranks increased by 44 percent from the 2010 Census, to a statewide population of over one million. Even with 11 percent of the state identifying as AAPI (technical malfunction)

MR. BARLAS: Mr. Seehra, I think we lost you.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Seehra is still on; we cannot hear him very well.

MR. BARLAS: Mr. Seehra, is there something wrong with your microphone? (no response)

Mr. Seehra?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: He is still on the call, but we can barely hear him, and I don't think he can hear us right now.

MR. BARLAS: Okay.

I don't hear him anymore. So maybe, Madam Secretary, we go to the next person, and if there is a way to contact--

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Okay, we will. We will contact him.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Sukhvir Singh.

SUKHVIR SINGH: Thank you.

I would like to start by saying thank you to the Committee for providing this forum to hear concerns directly from the public related to redistricting.

My name is Sukhvir Singh, and I am here to humbly request the Committee to strongly consider shifting Morris Plains and

Parsippany-Troy Hill into the 25th Legislative District and out of the 26th. I am currently a student at Rutgers Law School, but more importantly I am someone who has called Morris Plains and Parsippany my home for my entire life.

I grew up attending the amazing schools we have, and being part of an ethnic community I am proud to call mine. This community, the South Asian community, is vibrant and thriving in Morris County, but for the past 10 years the State has been doing it a disservice based on the current legislative mapping. By placing Morris Plains and Parsippany in the 26th District, the South Asian community and community at large are being unfairly and needlessly divided. For so long, all across Morris County -- from Boonton to Randolph to Parsippany -- South Asians have been opening and operating businesses, establishing families, and giving back to the community. But we are currently unable to have our voices heard because we are being split; and our vote, as a result, is being significantly diluted.

The Constitution provides voting as a right for one reason: To make sure the peoples' voice is heard. But that is not possible when a person who casts a vote wonders if their voice will truly be heard, or if it will be drowned out because it has been removed from his community with whom he shares his voice and views.

One of the pillars of the South Asian community is its adherence to faith and religious expression. From all over the county, we travel to attend temples, mosques, and churches that all have one thing in common -- they are currently located in towns represented by the 25th District. It is only Morris Plains and Parsippany that are excluded and pushed into the 26th for no valid reason. No matter what angle you approach

it from, the community exists together and in one place -- except when it comes to legislative mapping, which is what makes this so important as we are presented with a chance to fix this going forward.

Even when viewing it from a logistical perspective, it makes sense to shift Morris Plains and Parsippany into the 25th, because they share so many services like sewage, waste disposal, and school districts with Morris Township and Morristown, both of which are located in the 25th.

Some of the previous speakers have spoken on the damage being done to Morris County. The irony is that the speakers who urge keeping these towns in LD26 reference the Indian and minority community being heard. That's rich, considering none of them have true experience navigating life in Morris County as a South Asian. Well I, as an Indian person, a minority, tell you -- living in these towns, that the damage being done is by keeping us in LD26.

So I ask you again, this Committee, to take into consideration the need to preserve unity amongst the communities and groups that are proud to call New Jersey their home, and to move Morris Plains and Parsippany into the 25th.

Thank you Chairman Barlas, Chairman Jones, and Judge Carchman. I hope to one day follow and emulate your footsteps, as you serve the State as well as you do today.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you very much, Mr. Singh. And I think we can all say that you will probably be here one day, and we'll all be working for you, is my guess.

So thank you for your testimony this evening.

Madam Secretary, do we want to try Mr. Seehra one more time?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Yes.

MR. SEEHRA: Yes, sorry about that, I think I'm back.

MR. BARLAS: There you go.

MR. SEEHRA: All right. I'll kind of start-- I'm not sure which part I got cut off at.

MR. BARLAS: We heard Defense Fund, and I think Robbinsville or something is where you said you live, correct?

MR. SEEHRA: Okay, sure; I'll just start from close to the beginning there.

I am a resident of Robbinsville for the past 11 years; and born and raised in Hamilton, New Jersey, and have a deep connection with most of the AAPI community here in New Jersey, as well as many of the other minority communities.

The 2020 Census established AAPI voters as the fastest-growing ethnic group in New Jersey, and our ranks increased by 44 percent from the 2010 Census, to the statewide population of over a million people now. And even with 11 percent of the state identifying as AAPI, the recent victories -- even with the recent victories by AAPI politicians and statewide elections, proportional representation for us in New Jersey is a long way off.

While both the Parkway and the Turnpike maps make some meaningful progress for our communities, they also make some key mistakes that are dividing up AAPI communities of interest. We found five key areas in New Jersey that have strong thriving AAPI communities, and would like the final map to reflect these groups.

The first is a growing South Asian community in the Greater Philadelphia area, which includes Cherry Hill and Voorhees. And we're happy to see that both the Parkway and Turnpike maps currently place them together. The second is the AAPI residents of Millburn and Livingston, who chose to settle in these towns because of their proximity to Parsippany. Currently, both the maps do not keep this community together.

The next is Bergen County. We're not satisfied about how the Korean community is split in both maps. Bergen County has the second-largest AAPI population and the largest East Asian population in New Jersey, which is well over 50 percent in many towns in Bergen. The first is Jersey City, which is one of the most densely populated South Asian communities in the country, and the last is the community based in Middlesex and Mercer County. And as a resident of Robbinsville, and someone who grew up in Hamilton, I would like to see that that community continues to -- that district continues to reflect the community.

Currently the Parkway map places both of those two towns in a geography and community that many AAPIs just simply don't interact with. And this is a problem with the AAPI community all over the state. Diluting the AAPI vote in districts that are not reflective of our reality has been all too common; but it continues to lead all ethnic groups in the rate of growth, and we really want the new maps to reflect this.

I would like to refer the Commissioners to the racial equity map, which is created with an eye towards rectifying the historical underrepresentation of AAPIs and other minority groups in New Jersey, and endorsed by a large number of nonpartisan organizations, and shared with the Commission last week. At a high level, it is only fair that a state with 48

percent minority population has half its districts -- 20 out of 40 -- constructed to be majority people of color. The Unity Map achieves this. Further, it creates not just an Asian plurality district, but very possibly, in a few years, an AAPI majority district in LD18, which is 43.9 percent AAPI right now as drawn.

There's a bunch of other communities that are AAPI that are addressed within this map. The Unity Map is legally compliant, achieves the goals of ours and many other minority advocates, while keeping our communities of interest whole.

I would like to again thank the Commissioners for opening up the process for public engagement, truly making it democratic, and allowing me the time to speak today.

As a closing note, I strongly urge you all to take another look at the racial equity map submitted by the Fair Districts Coalition, and make the changes to allow the AAPI communities across the state to be able to vote alongside each other in choosing their representation.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Seehra.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Frederick Stone, following by Herb Tarbous.

F R E D E R I C K S T O N E: Members of the Commission, thank you for hearing me this evening.

My name is Fred Stone. I am a resident of Red Bank, where I serve on the School Board -- for which I do not speak this evening; I have to make that clear. I speak solely as a private citizen, to express my concern

over the placement of Red Bank in the 13th Legislative District on the Parkway redistricting map.

Presently in the 11th Legislative District, Red Bank is in the company of Long Branch, Neptune Township, and Asbury Park. These four municipalities each have substantial African American and/or Latinx populations. Consequently, they have a common cause in striving to build a more equitable society for their communities; a cause we should all share. Separating Red Bank from these other three municipalities -- moving Red Bank from a 35 percent minority population in the 11th District to a 22 percent minority population in the 13th District, significantly reduces the likelihood that these strivings will find representation in Trenton.

I strongly urge that this aspect of the Parkway map not be adopted.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you very much for testifying this evening, Mr. Stone.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Herb Tarbous, followed by Amy Torres.

MR. BARLAS: Mr. Tarbous.

HERB TARBOUS: Hi, thank you once again for the opportunity to share my perspective.

Cutting to the chase, we need fundamental systemic reformation of our political system here in New Jersey. From a global perspective, the evolution of our State's political and party system is lagging. The last time that people of New Jersey had a meaningful voice in the

construction of the Legislature was 1844. The 1844 Constitution was born in the age of slavery and ethnic cleansing, and limited suffrage to white male landowners; and maintained the county-based apportionment plan which was hastily installed in 1776, and declared unconstitutional in 1962.

In some ways, the paradigm of separation of rulers and the people, which was present during both the English and Dutch colonial rule, lived on. The 17th Century Dutch proprietorships of East and West Jersey grew out of commercial centers such as Perth Amboy, which eventually grew into a major east coast seaport for the importation of captive Africans. Later in the 17th Century, the English took control and installed provincial governors, answerable only to the English crown. Minor adjustments to the legislature were made *by* the legislature, until the New Jersey--

MR. BARLAS: Mr. Tarbous, I am going to ask you to bring us into the 21st Century, please.

MR. TARBOUS: Yes I will; yes I will, sir, thank you.

Minor adjustments to the legislature were made *by* the legislature until the New Jersey Supreme Court declared the plan in violation of the One Person One Vote doctrine. A court-ordered constitutional convention was convened in 1966, but the convention was almost entirely controlled by the special interests which controlled both parties.

The two parties conspired to neutralize the independent threat from having a voice at the convention. The tool of choice: The biased ballot device known as the county line. The parties conspired to create bipartisan county lines across the state. Rather than using the line to control the outcomes of primary elections, it was used to join members of both parties on a single county line, on the special election ballot. The 3 percent turnout

granted only the most loyal partisans access to the convention. Hence, the bipartisan bureaucracy continues to block grassroots participation to this day.

I am grateful for this Commission's dedication to altering this trajectory. I have performed an initial incumbency impact analysis of the three maps to uncover the districts which the collective submissions have identified for attention. Not surprisingly, the Parkway and Turnpike maps are mutually exclusive; meanwhile, the Unity Map specifies the greatest magnitude of change, and correlation of the Unity with the Parkway map is about 40 percent greater than the Turnpike map.

Given the current choices, I would choose the Unity Map first, given the greatest magnitude of change; with the Parkway map as a second choice due to its higher correlation with the Unity Map.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Tarbous.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, Roshard Williams will be calling the next few witnesses.

MR. BARLAS: Okay.

MR. WILLIAMS: The next speaker is Amy Torres, followed by Brad Van Arnum.

A M Y T O R R E S: Thank you, thank you; such a delight to have my very own introducer.

Thank you, Commissioners, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Amy Torres, I am with the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice. We are a proud member of the Fair Districts Coalition. Many of the Alliance's own members and partners are testifying today or have testified

over the last few months, so we stand in support of those statements that call for racial equity and a right-sizing of representation in New Jersey, which is now a state where half of our residents are persons of color.

New Jersey is more diverse than we've ever been, and it should be no surprise that we are also one of the most diverse states in the nation, both in percentage of people of color, but also the racial and ethnic diversity within communities of color.

I want to thank Assembly member Sumter for her remarks at the very beginning of today's hearing, that this is just the counted population. We know that there are many systemic barriers, and intentional design barriers from the past Federal administration, that contributed to probable Census 2020 undercounts. This is a point that my 32BJ colleague Adrian also has pointed out.

It's also important to mark that these communities are growing, and it is a trend that is not unique to 2020; it has stretched over the last two decades. That is why we were so proud to work with partners towards the Unity Map, which demonstrated that communities of color -- again, half of the state's population -- can be represented in majority districts in half of the Legislature.

I am focusing the short amount of time that I have for testimony today on two groups that continue to be overlooked by this process, and were underrepresented in the first release of maps that came out this week: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Middle Eastern and North African communities. MENA and Arab American communities grew over 40 percent in the last 20 years. New Jersey is also home to the second-largest Muslim population per capita in the nation. We know undercounts

for these groups are highly likely, not only due to the reasons outlined above, but also because MENA is not a category included on the decennial census, a point raised several times by PACC. And we are also only able to glean general answers about this community from census and American Community Survey questions related to ancestry.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing group nationally, projected to double to more than 47,000,000 by 2060, and projected to remain the fastest-growing group, second only to mixed race Americans, through 2060. In New Jersey, the AAPI population has now surpassed 1,000,000, making up over 10 percent of the state. This is over a 40 percent increase from just the last census, and this community is a major driver of the state's overall population. They are 10 percent of eligible voters in this state.

Contrary to prior testimony this afternoon, it is not packing to have districts where these communities are over 20 percent, when it is very clear that if drawn together, they could be a plurality or even a majority district. Splitting up diverse communities so that they can be a cherry on top of multiple split districts, rather than just one or two on their own, is not equity, it is not empowerment; it has a disenfranchising effect and it is wrong. Separately, while voting age population may be a consideration, it is dangerous to suggest that only citizens should be drawn together. We know legal service programs, naturalization processes, ESL classes, voter registration drives -- these are all things -- I am nearly done -- that are woefully underfunded in the state and largely stem from public policy decisions.

This is a misperception that transcends every level of our society and government, so it is not enough to say that we need

representation that looks like us or comes from our community, but that represents us in public policy decisions. Too often these groups are viewed as a monolith. They are perceived as apolitical or low propensity, when in reality it is the division of these communities across the multiple district lines that dilutes their political influences and contributes to a cycle where campaigns don't reach out, communities aren't empowered to vote, or aware of important election milestones. And as a result, those electorates see diminished turnout.

In fact, in a national survey following the landmark 2016 Federal Election, it was found that 70 percent of AAPI voters received no contact from either partisan or nonpartisan campaign outreach. You can just imagine how these disparities look in a state like New Jersey, where our State elections are held on odd-numbered years; a state where the top 10 languages spoken outside of English and Spanish are Arabic and Asian languages.

So I know I'm short on time, I'll just summarize: We call on the Commission to revisit both maps, especially Mercer and Middlesex, the latter of which contains some of the most diverse corridors in the state, but where AAPI communities are split sometimes two, three, or four times; Essex and Morris counties specifically around Livingston and Parsippany; Essex and Hudson AAPI populations; and MENA populations in Patterson, Clifton, Totowa, Wayne, and Pompton Lakes.

Again, we just focus on these two communities in comment, but uplift the testimony of our members and partners, committed to maps that center racial equity, and redistribute a fair share of political power and influence towards Black, Latino, and other communities of color.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Torres.

And if you can-- I think some of us were trying to keep up with you, but if you can submit that testimony in writing, I would really appreciate it. My shorthand is not that good.

Mr. Secretary.

MR. WILLIAMS: The next speaker is Brad Van Arnum, followed by Charlene Walker.

B R A D V A N A R N U M: Hello; good evening, and thank you to members of the Commission for this chance to testify.

I previously made a statement back in December, when I presented a map I had made of the entire state. Today, I wanted to share my thoughts on the two draft maps that were made public, and present one final map of my own that tries to combine the best features of each draft.

First, I wanted to sincerely thank the Commission for releasing the two draft maps. It was a very positive step for increasing public participation, and there was much to like about each draft map. The Parkway map did a great job with the districts in South Jersey, especially, but also handles northwestern and north Central Jersey well. On the other hand, the Turnpike map made more logical choices in the northeast, as well as in Central Jersey, which is where I am from.

To me the question becomes, how might the Commission reconcile these two draft maps? The two maps have major differences, and I would be concerned if either one was enacted as-is. Both maps are aggressive in certain areas in terms of trying to disadvantage the other party.

I would like to turn now to the map I created. Basically, I sought to make a compromised map that took elements of each draft. I made

sure to follow the basic rules, such as keeping population deviation under 5 percent. And although continuity was not my overarching goal, I did end up mostly keeping the essence of the existing 40 districts. Broadly speaking, my compromised map looks similar to the Parkway draft in South Jersey, as well as in Morris County and the north west. Meanwhile, northeast and Central Jersey are the places where I closely followed the Turnpike map.

One of my goals with this map was to add majority minority districts where possible, and one of the easiest places to do so is with the 5th District. In this case, the Parkway map did a better job. Following its example, my 5th is about 28 percent Black and 29 percent Hispanic, which can be accomplished without changing nearby districts too much. One other potential majority minority district that I hope the Commission will consider is the 16th -- which I'm very familiar with, having lived in Montgomery for about a decade before moving to my current home in West Windsor. In this case, I feel the Turnpike map was the stronger one.

My version of the 16th is quite similar, but instead of gaining West Windsor, my 16th has Bridgewater. I then ended up putting West Windsor in the 14th, since it shares a school system with Plainsboro, and ideally should be in the same district. My 14th ends up being a bit over 22 percent Asian American and, as with my 16th, it is right on the cusp of being majority non-white and would likely reach that status in the next few years. In total, including the 14th and 16th, my map has 19 majority minority districts.

On a final note, at a time when many districts across the country are safe for one party, my map embraced competition. In South Jersey, Districts 1 through 4 as well as the 8th, are all competitive. Elsewhere

in the state, I have another five competitive districts, bringing the total to 10. On a related point, my map has an efficiency gap of almost 0 percent, which means that it has a very low level of partisan bias.

In closing, I truly enjoyed putting this map together, and seeing the two drafts was very helpful as it became more clear to me how each feels the state should be divided. I do think my map offers more stability compared to the drafts; but still finds ways to make improvements when it comes to minority representation and partisan fairness.

I hope members of the Commission will consider this compromised map as a possible way of combining the best elements of the two drafts.

Thank you again, so much, for your time, and here is wishing you all the best of luck.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Van Arnum.

You sent that map into OLS?

MR. VAN ARNUM: I did.

MR. BARLAS: Okay, great. We really appreciate it.

Judge, I don't know, I think you got a threat from Mr. Van Arnum over here. (laughter)

Not that you're disappointed, by the way. I can tell you're very disappointed.

Mr. Secretary.

MR. WILLIAMS: The next speaker is Charlene Walker, followed by Helen Zamora-Bustos.

MR. BARLAS: Ms. Walker.

C H A R L E N E W A L K E R: Thank you to the Commission for the opportunity to provide testimony for fair districts, to ensure that the voices of every New Jerseyan matters in our democracy.

My name is Charlene Walker, and I am the Executive Director of Faith in New Jersey, which is part of the National Faith in Action Network, and we have mobilized thousands of people across the state to participate in our democracy.

Community input is vital, and I applaud you for releasing the proposed maps so that people may respond. However, I would like to encourage you to actually extend the ability for people to respond, so working class people can participate with at least one session on the weekend.

I've heard arguments in the testimonies today that say that you should not see color, right, that it does not matter in this process. Such statements are naïve and are nothing more than talking points aimed to take away the voice of the global majority. The truth is, although the global majority is not politically monolith, we have shared concerns that come from our accents, our complexions, our faith traditions, and the reality of how our communities have been impacted by political determinants that have harmed our communities.

The Fair Districts Unity Map finally provides the opportunity for our voices to be heard, with 20 districts of color mirroring what is essentially a 50 percent global majority population. I must admit, when I reviewed the proposed maps I become frustrated, as a black woman, to find that even though there was growth in the global majority, it was pretty much ignored. They weren't given their fair share of representation. Black people are 15 percent of the state, yet only have one Black majority district.

My ancestors died for their right to vote, yet here we are still fighting for our vote to count.

We must have three majority Black districts, as indicated and submitted in the Unity Map. The 22 percent Latinx population is a vital part of New Jersey, and they must be able to wield their vote; they must have four majority Latinx districts. The Asian population has grown by 30 percent in the last ten years; the Commission should draw Asian plurality and influence districts wherever possible, without dividing their communities of interest.

Also, our Arab siblings' voices must be heard. Their testimony was invaluable. Please keep their communities together.

In closing, our legislative districts are drawn -- the way that they are drawn is a declaration of whose voice matters. And time and time again, this political project, called *democracy*, has chosen to exclude those of us with accents or with skin kissed by the sun.

So I pray that this Commission seizes this opportunity to make a declaration that all of our voices matter, and that actually draws the circle wide enough that we can say that we actually love our neighbors.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Walker, for your testimony this evening.

Mr. Secretary.

MR. WILLIAMS: The next speaker is Helen Zamora-Bustos, followed by Bruce Morgan.

HELEN ZAMORA - BUSTOS: Good evening; Helen Zamora-Bustos from Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center.

I would like to ask the Secretary for a little bit of extra time; I have quite a bit of members who are mainly Spanish speakers, and I would like to give my testimony in Spanish first, and then in English.

MR. BARLAS: Sure.

MS. ZAMORA-BUSTOS: Thank you to all of you who are attending here today. And I am extremely proud to be a speaker today.

I want to again note that the lack of accessibility of language during these meetings is a problematic issue. As we know by now, because we've heard it time and time again, many of the -- a lot of the population here in the State of New Jersey are immigrants of many places, who speak many languages, and the lack of accessibility of language during these meetings is problematic. Because not everybody is able to understand the importance of what is going on, and in turn, they cannot have their voices heard; or are intimidated to show participation and express their concerns.

I would also like to point out that I think it is very sad and maddening -- and frightening -- the fact that the maps are showing the division of the populations, the Hispanic population and the population of the people of color. Especially because we are trying to go through this process to build fair maps in which every group has and can exercise political power. By the way -- in some of the ways that have been proposed, that is impossible and very difficult to do; so it makes this process moot and it makes it-- Just because we have acknowledgement of the change and the diversity of the population, that is not enough.

Acknowledgement is important, but the exercise of actually making that change in the Legislature is equally important so those voices are heard and their needs are being met.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity for speaking tonight, and I hope that more audiences are made available to the public, to continue to speak on the subject until a fair mapping is achieved.

Thank you, and have a good night.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you.

Mr. Secretary -- Madam Secretary, I'm not sure who is in charge now.

MR. WILLIAMS: The next speaker is Bruce Morgan; and following Mr. Morgan's remarks, Madam Secretary will continue to call the roll.

BRUCE S. MORGAN: Good evening Chairman Barlas, Chairman Jones. I want to thank you very much -- the committee -- for allowing this hearing after publishing the maps, giving us a chance to discuss them.

I am President of the New Brunswick Area Branch of the NAACP. I am the First Vice President of the New Jersey State Conference NAACP, and I have also chaired the Middlesex County Human Relations Commission.

I am very intimately familiar with the demographics and economic, cultural, historical, and community interests; particularly those in Central New Jersey and my home community of Highland Park -- which is very much a microcosm of the municipalities and the majority of communities that compromise Middlesex County and make up Legislative District 18.

I am here to support the Fair Districts Unity Map, particularly as it has configured Legislative District 18. The map has done an excellent job of keeping the majority of Legislative 18 together, yet the

municipalities seem to have -- many municipalities seem to have been cut out. The municipalities of Legislative District 18 are comprised of a wide range of ethnic, racial, economic, and religious communities that have grown together. Of course, our legislators have been able to create legislation beneficial and fair to all.

I am opposed to the Parkway and Turnpike maps that have been presented to the public, because these maps force legislators to divert their interests between counties whose concerns often are vastly different. The Parkway and Turnpike maps will force some municipalities in Middlesex County to take a backseat to elected officials who often owe their loyalty to another county. The Fair Districts Unity Map will enable the legislators of Legislative District 18 to devote their focus to a population and businesses of a common interest.

I implore you to accept this configuration as designed. Hopefully you can keep all Middlesex County together, including South Plainfield and the rest of the municipalities. It will be the critical way to create a district that is acceptable to the citizens and allows for a fair and equitable representation. It will also be a district that is readily able to accommodate any changes, should they occur over the next 10 years until the next redistricting alignment takes place.

And I, too, wish that you would have a hearing on the weekends to allow working individuals to speak their voice before the final map is submitted.

Thank you very much; have a good evening.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Morgan, for testifying this evening.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Brianna Rodriguez, followed by Ava Edwards.

BRIANNA RODRIGUEZ: Hello. My name is Brianna Rodriguez, and I would like to thank you guys for giving me the opportunity to speak. Also, to thank the Commission for having this Public Hearing and for agreeing to host multiple hearings, as well as releasing the maps before the final meeting.

I am here to respond to the released maps, and how they specifically affect my community. So, I am a member of the South Jersey Camden County community. I grew up in Camden and in Pennsauken; I went to Camden and Pennsauken schools. My entire family lives there. My mother is a Social Worker for the Camden County Board of Social Services, and my father is a firefighter for the Camden City Engine 9. So my community includes Camden, Pennsauken, and Merchantville.

I just implore that the Commission respect those who have spoken before the Commission at this hearing, and keep these communities of interest together. With the proposed maps, my community has been cut up -- specifically in the Turnpike map -- and in Legislative District 5, Camden is split from Pennsauken and Merchantville. And I'm not sure if you guys are super aware of this, but Camden County Technical School sits right in Pennsauken on Browning Road. Camden County Technical School accepts students from all across Camden County. So this map effectively is splitting more than half of the students who attend this high school from the legislative district.

We share grocery stores and a single Walmart between Camden and Pennsauken. Pennsauken shares Cooper Hospital with Camden, as it is the closest hospital to the township. The majority of the school districts in Pennsauken and Camden are students of Black and brown descent.

And this is especially frustrating, because I come from an extremely diverse community of color, and all of New Jersey's population growth over the last 10 years has come from New Jersey's communities of color. We should be lifting these communities up and not cutting them up in this next round of maps.

Given the largest and growing Hispanic/Latino population in New Jersey, 22 percent of the state and up to 29 percent in the last 10 years, the Commission should draw four majority Hispanic/Latino districts to ensure those residents have adequate representation in the next decade. Currently, both maps only contain two majority Hispanic/Latino districts. I cannot fathom why we would proceed with maps that are so obviously failing at truly representing the residents of New Jersey, and failing to center racial equity.

I give my support fully to the Fair Districts Unity Map that does the work of keeping these communities of interest together.

Thank you for your time.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Rodriguez, for your testimony this evening.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Ava Edwards, followed by Danielle Combs.

Ava Edwards is not on the call anymore.

It will be Danielle Combs.

DANIELLE V. COMBS: Good evening members of the New Jersey Reapportionment Commission, Chairman Jones, and Chairman Barlas.

My name is Danielle Combs, an aspiring attorney and recent Stockton University graduate. I am currently the Administrative Director for the New Jersey State Conference -- otherwise known as the NJSC with abbreviations -- NAACP; and a proud member of the Camden County East Youth Unit, which is a part of the NJSC Youth in College, where Jasmine Jones is the President and Maisha Aziz is the Advisor. I am also a member of the New Jersey State Conference Youth in College Political Action Committee. I am also a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. However, today, I am here in my capacity as an NAACP member.

Many NAACP members are watching today via a watch party with the NJISI, and the redistricting cohort of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

(indiscernible) for the members of this Commission, is that I am a lifelong resident of New Jersey, and I vote in the 6th Legislative District. The Commission should seriously consider adopting all or much of the Fair Districts Unity Map. This map succeeds at centering racial equity and fairly representing residents of New Jersey. It meets the criteria laid out by Judge Carchman last month, and the NAACP New Jersey State Conference supports this map.

This map includes 20 majority person of color districts, which are half the districts, and the current map has 15. This map also includes three majority Black districts; the current map has one majority

district and one plurality. The map that we proposed also includes four majority Hispanic districts and two Hispanic plurality districts -- which the current map has two majority districts and three plurality districts. Our map includes two Asian plurality districts, including one with over 40 percent Asian population, and the current map does not include any.

And as many communities of interest are also included -- that we could realistically keep together, and without putting any Black communities of interest against each other. New Jersey's total Black population is about 15 percent of our state, but there is only one majority Black district in the Legislature. The Commission should draw more majority Black districts to ensure that Black residents, who too often have been historically suppressed and excluded from the political conversation, have fair representation. Currently, both proposed maps only have one majority Black district.

This week, members of the NAACP all over the world will celebrate the impact that the NAACP adults and Youth in College members have made on the political process. It would be a befitting honor during this celebration if our advocacy on behalf of persons of color is recognized, and that most of -- if not all -- of this Unity Map is adopted.

I ask that each Commissioner member -- that the members' maps drawn will determine the allocation of political power and representation.

Thank you for your time.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you very much, Ms. Combs.

And to you and your group, I want to say thank you for organizing that watch party. That's pretty cool that you guys are doing that this evening.

And good luck on one day hopefully becoming a lawyer.

MS. COMBS: Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Matthew Montekio, followed by Karen Arakelian.

MATTHEW MONTEKIO: Thank you, members of the New Jersey Legislative Apportionment Commission, for holding this Public Hearing and allowing me to speak here today.

My name is Matthew Montekio, and I am a resident of Red Bank Borough in Monmouth County. Today, I wanted to speak about the special relationship between three towns in Monmouth County: Red Bank Borough, Long Branch City, and the City of Asbury Park.

For many years, these three municipalities have always been a part of the same legislative district. I was disappointed and concerned when I saw the proposal to take Red Bank out of the 11th District. I am asking the Commission to once again join Red Bank, Long Branch, and Asbury Park into the 11th Legislative District.

Often referred to as the Tri Cities, these three towns share many commonalities; in fact, there is even a local publication, called the *TriCityNews*, that focuses on arts, culture, and politics in these three towns. Among many interests that these communities share, Red Bank, Long Branch, and Asbury are considered to be the urban centers of Monmouth

County, with large walkable downtowns, multiple modes of public transportation, and large populations of ethnic and racial diversity.

These three towns also share many of the same challenges -- from density and affordable housing, to educating first generation children. Long Branch and Red Bank are also home to two major hospitals: Monmouth Medical and Riverview Medical Center, respectively, which serve the larger Eastern Monmouth area. All three municipalities have large populations of minorities. According to the 2020 Census data, 46 percent of Red Bank's resident, 43 percent of Long Branch residents, and 61 percent of Asbury Park residents are Black, Hispanic, or Latino. Undoubtedly, race and ethnicity should be considered communities of interest.

By splitting up Red Bank, Long Branch, and Asbury Park -- in addition to Neptune -- we will effectively dilute the largest minority population blocks in Monmouth County and disenfranchise Black and brown voters.

I urge the Commission to not deny these towns and their residents a collective voice to choose their State representatives in Trenton. In addition, arts and culture are among the many connections. Historically, and still true today, these three towns are the epicenter of arts and culture in Monmouth County, with the Count Basie and Two River Theatres in Red Bank, West End Art Center and the New Jersey Repertory Theater in Long Branch, and Convention Hall and Stone Pony in Asbury Park. Some of the biggest names in music and theater pass through these towns on a yearly basis.

All three municipalities have vibrant downtowns with dozens of art galleries. Having these towns share a legislative district will

ensure that we have a common voice in our representatives, who can advocate for our collective needs. When drawing your map, please consider joining Asbury Park, Long Branch and Red Bank into the 11th Legislative District.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr.-- I'm sorry; you pronounce your name Mont-ee-key-oh?

MR. MONTEKIO: Mon-tick-ee-oh.

MR. BARLAS: Montekio; I apologize for that.

Thank you for your testimony this evening.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Karen Arakelian, followed by Basma Bsharat.

MR. BARLAS: Madam Secretary, I believe we already did Ms. Arakelian a few hours ago.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Okay.

The next speaker is Basma Bsharat, followed by Nora Brower.

B A S M A B S H A R A T: Hello Commission; thank you for the opportunity to testify in front of you today.

My name is Basma Bsharat. I live in Passaic County and I am a Special Education Teacher at Christopher Columbus Middle School; my son is a student in our district.

The explosive growth of people of color in the state is not reflected in the Turnpike or Parkway maps. According to the latest census, people of color are now over 48 percent of the state's population, and people of color account for all population growth in New Jersey in the last decade.

Both proposed maps only draw 17 majority people of color districts, significantly less than their population would suggest, and leave out major communities of interest for Asian American and Pacific Islanders, and Middle Eastern and North African populations. Latinos make up over 20 percent of the state's population; the Turnpike and Parkway maps only propose two majority Latino districts, respectively. Both maps also fail to reflect the growth in the Black population, only drawing one majority Black district each.

As an educator, I see how vital it is for me to engage school and district leadership in order to get my students' needs met, and that is why I stand before you today. I see how our students' enrollment has grown over the last decade in my school and my district. The economic contributions of my community are significant, and will continue to grow as I educate our generation of leaders.

We've highlighted six counties with significant Arab populations, including Passaic, Hudson, Bergen, Essex, Middlesex, and Monmouth counties. And I am here today to endorse the Unity Map proposed by Fair Districts New Jersey. The proposed Unity Map, which Fair Districts New Jersey and the Palestinian American Community Center have worked with community leaders to develop, demonstrates how to draw 20 majority people of color districts, demonstrating that populations that make up half the state can be represented in half of the legislative districts.

I hope you take our community of interest map into consideration, and think about the future generations of voters that can either have representation, or go another decade without. Please consider the Unity Map presented by Fair Districts New Jersey.

Thank you for listening to me today.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Bsharat, for your testimony, and thank you for what you do teaching special ed children.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Nora Brower, followed by George Cook.

MR. BARLAS: Ms. Brower?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: It looks like Nora Brower left the Zoom room.

The next speaker is George Cook, followed by Loraine Outing.

G E O R G E C O O K: Hi, good evening to all, everyone on the Commission.

Thank you for all your hard work; I know it's hard.

That being said, I want to come out against both the Parkway and the Turnpike maps. I am a resident of Hillside, I have served on the Board of Education, and I am a former Councilperson. And these maps are putting us in Essex County, and we are a Union County town. I believe we deserve to be in Union County where our needs are best met.

And not only would being in Essex County present an issue as far as county lines, we'd also be with towns that have -- I'm looking at median incomes from information I gathered earlier -- you have towns with \$225,000 to \$166,000, whereas in Hillside we're a working class community and make \$75,000. And while I'm sure we all want the same things when it comes to clean streets, good schools for our kids, our issues may not be the same as those in Milburn, Maplewood, and West Orange or Livingston. We

have issues with school funding, daycare, food insecurity, income inequality. We have things we want to talk about such as being on Review Boards, maternal mortality rate for Black women, crime. And I believe that if this map passes we'll be talking about voter disenfranchisement also.

So I believe that-- I'm asking this Committee to please take into the fact our needs; and that we should have the right to pick the people who are going to represent us and address these issues. And I believe this current map, this new (indiscernible), does not give us the chance to make our voices heard.

So please, if you can, keep us in the 20th District where we belong and our interests are being met.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Cook, for testifying on behalf of your community this evening.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Loraine Outing, followed by Mattie Holloway.

LORAIN E O U T I N G: Good evening.

I would like to thank the Board of County (*sic*) Commissioners for this opportunity to voice my complaint.

I am a senior citizen of the Roselle community. I am voicing my support for Roselle's Black and Latino communities. We are best served by our continued relationship with the Union, Vauxhall, and Elizabeth towns.

So please remember and take into consideration our Black and brown seniors.

Thank you for your time.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Outing, for testifying this evening.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Next speaker is Mattie Holloway, followed by Aldeana Mitchell.

MATTIE HOLLOWAY: Good afternoon to all the Commissioners.

My name is Mattie Holloway. I am a longtime resident of Hillside. I have lived here all of my adult life, have reared my children here, have grown to love, work in the community, advocate for seniors, youth, and all of the residents of Hillside. I serve with the concerned citizens of Hillside whose voices would like to be heard within my speech today.

And there are so many areas in which our community does not even compare to Morris County and the towns that are in LD27. I think that if we were to be carved out of our district, our rightful district, and have one community in Union County moved over to LD27, that would be a disenfranchise, it would violate our civil rights, it would be unfair to us as a race of people, our representation would be lost. We would be -- we would receive undo (*sic*) funding, and it would be unfair to us. And our community is a community where our citizens utilize -- many of them utilize public transportation.

We are so different from the LD27 that is being proposed for our township, and to carve us out of Union County would definitely negatively impact our youth, our seniors, our community. We do not compare in any way socially, economically, and with our school district; our

representation will be lost. We would be left out, cast out, and that should not be allowed to happen.

I implore all of you on the Commission to take another look at what you will do if you negatively impact our community -- to remove us from our LD20 into LD29 -- which would be hard, and in many ways, for our needs. And this is something that I ask you -- to just consider us, be fair to Union County.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Holloway, for patiently waiting this evening to testify.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Aldeana Mitchell, followed by Faris El Akbani.

ALDEANA MITCHELL: Good evening. This is Aldeana Mitchell, and I've lived in Hillside for over 47 years.

I was there when we were part of, I believe it was, Legislative District -- I think it was 29, and we were part of Essex County, Newark. And that did not go well for us; we had no representation. And then we were finally put into Legislative District 20, where we have gotten -- we have the representation, you know? Our Senators and Assembly people are always available to us, and now all of a sudden they want to put us back where we were several years ago.

And this is not beneficial to our seniors, it is not beneficial to our schools. And keep in mind, Hillside is the only town that is part of Union County that is grouped in with 27. That makes no sense at all.

So I would ask, please reconsider what you're doing. I realize it's probably a tough position for the people who are sitting there making this decision, but we can't let this be about the politicians making it better for them. We have to make it better for our residents.

And so I would really-- Please, reconsider; leave us in District 20 because we've done this before and it did not work well for us. So I don't think we should repeat the same mistake.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Mitchell, for testifying this evening.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Faris El Akbani, followed by Alice Collopy.

Looks like Faris El Akbani is no longer on the Zoom call. The next speaker is Alice Collopy, followed by Jean Durbin.

A L I C E C O L L O P Y: Good evening; my name is Alice Collopy. I am the Chair of the Morris Plains Republican County Committee. I am a 30-plus year resident of Morris Plains -- Jay Webber's hometown.

I would first like to thank the Commission and Judge Carchman for the opportunity to speak to you tonight.

The Turnpike map is the focus of my remarks. The Turnpike map singles out specific towns for especially unfair treatment. My town, Morris Plains, is cut off from Parsippany -- a pairing of towns that has existed almost 50 years, since New Jersey went to a 40-District map in 1973. It also separates the large and growing Indian community in Morris Plains and Parsippany, comments about which you've heard this evening.

Jay Webber and Christian Borranco are the elected Assemblymen of our 26th District. Removing both of these Assemblymen from their district is an attempt to weaken the Republican Party inside the County, and thus the influence of the County statewide. The gerrymander of Assemblyman Webber, who is the second most senior Republican member of the Assembly, and the ranking Republican on both the Assembly Appropriations Committee and the Assembly Financial Institutions Committee, destroys a measure of seniority that Morris County has in Trenton.

The Turnpike map leaves the proposed 26th District with no Assembly incumbents. It throws the only Hispanic Republican on the State Legislature, Christian Borranco of Jefferson, into the Sussex County base, 24th District, with two Sussex County-based Assemblymen and Senators. It puts the county's most senior member -- again, Jay Webber of the Assembly, and its top legislative vote-getter -- in the 25th District, with the District's existing members of the Assembly and Senator.

The Democrats can't defeat Jay Webber at the polls, so they're trying to do so with this crude gerrymandering, called the *Turnpike map*. The Turnpike map gratuitously removes Republican legislators from their districts. You might as well have used a knife to depict the Turnpike map, instead of multicolor highlighters, because the effect of the Turnpike map is to cut off resident's rights to elect representatives from their own county.

I thank you all, and thank you all for the honor of speaking to you tonight.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Collopy, for testifying this evening.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the last three speakers on our list are Jean Durbin, followed by Vincent Kearney, and then Marcia Marley.

J E A N D U R B I N: Good evening; thanks very much.

I am Jean Durbin from Princeton, New Jersey, speaking about the 16th Legislative District. I am a former President of the Princeton Community Democratic Organization, and a current Committeeperson for the Democratic Municipal Committee.

Our 16th District proudly elected the first Muslim Asian American woman to the Assembly without any special configuration. As we think about how our State government should reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of our population, it begs the question of why we need the Republican plan to create a packed district to meet that goal, when we are already making advancements without reconfiguration. Whose voices would be amplified by the Republican map?

The next point I wanted to share is to just mention that we share a lot in common with Montgomery and Skillman, historically, in the sharing of a Princeton address, zip code, schools, youth sports leagues; and today, now in terms of housing developments, business and commerce, shared services, and green space conservation. And together we've created history in the Legislative District 16 -- in the State Legislature we've created history with the election of Andrew Zwicker to the Senate and Sadaf Jaffer to the Assembly.

I do think the Republican plan -- the proposed plan -- is meant to silence Democratic voices, and I would urge you to not accept it.

Thanks for your time; I appreciate it.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Durbin, for patiently waiting to testify this evening.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, we do have Vincent Kearney, Marcia Marley; and Mr. Fahim Abedrabbo is also on the call.

MR. BARLAS: Okay.

Mr. Kearney.

VINCENT KEARNEY: Yes, thank you, and good evening ladies and gentleman of the Commission.

My name is Vincent Kearney, I am a resident of Garwood, Union County, currently located in the 21st District.

I have seen both the proposed maps, and I wish to inform the Commission of my belief that Garwood is a good fit in the 21st. We share our two main thoroughfares, North and South Avenues, with our neighbor Westfield. We utilize the Westfield Regional Health Department, and many Westfield programs utilize the Garwood Recreation Complex as an overflow field when we have availability to host them. Our local businesses are also members of the Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce.

Though I am not appearing here in my capacity as an elected member of the Borough Council in Garwood, my experience there puts me in touch with many other residents on a regular basis, and provides me with this additional insight. We are happy where we are, and we don't

want to be tied into the larger cities to our east and west. Also, please consider that we've just had our congressional district changed.

While I have many differences with Senator Bramnick, a majority of residents in my town are satisfied with his representation and with the current makeup of the 21st District, which features numerous towns similar to ours.

I believe I am on firm ground in stating Garwood should not become a political football and should remain, if at all possible, in the same district as our neighbors in Westfield, and represented by the legislators that our voters just chose a few months ago.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Councilman, for your testimony this evening, after patiently waiting. You have been on my screen most of the night.

I appreciate the attention that you've given us.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, we have Marcia Marley, then Mr. Fahim Abedrabbo. And there were people raising their hands, so there might be one or two more who may have joined us later in the call.

So now, Marcia Marley, followed by Fahim Abedrabbo.

M A R C I A M A R L E Y: Hi, my name is Marcia Marley, President of BlueWave New Jersey.

I first want to thank the Apportionment Commission for allowing me to speak about the importance of a fair redistricting process. In any democracy, the redistricting process should be transparent and include

public input. I commend the Commission for publishing these two maps and for holding the Public Hearing prior to approval of a final version.

At the first public hearing, I testified on the principles that should be used in drawing district maps. One of these fundamental principles was the protection of communities of interest and color, and their representation. I want to again commend the Commission for increasing the number of majority-minority districts in both published maps, to 17 from the current 15. Is it enough to reflect New Jersey's -- (technical difficulties)

MR. BARLAS: I think we lost Ms. Marley. It's frozen.

MS. MARLEY: -- equity, and to keep communities of interest intact.

Can you hear me?

MR. BARLAS: We can hear you now, you froze for a second.

MS. MARLEY: Okay.

So that is not my interest tonight. Tonight, I want to draw the Commission's attention to the importance of correctly measuring partisan fairness or partisan impact when comparing maps. It matters which election year you use. I advocate using a weighted average of recent years, where the weight incorporates any underlying secular trends.

For example, a partisan index should use a weighted average of the 2017, 2019, and 2021 votes. By basing it on off-year elections, we are taking into account voters' choice in more local-level elections.

Finally, a map should not be drawn to benefit a party unable to achieve recent election success in the district. For example, compare the flipping of districts and the two published maps. The Parkway

flips to Republican three competitive districts that the Democrats have won over the last several years. In one district, the Turnpike map does the same flip from Republican to Democrat. This flipping undermines the will of voters in competitive districts by supporting their electoral choices in what *were* competitive districts.

To summarize, as I said in my earlier testimony, a good map will protect minority communities from being cracked apart or packed into the minimum number of districts possible; will empower communities of color to elect candidates of their choice; will preserve political districts where possible; and will reflect the will of the voters and minimize partisan gerrymandering.

Thank you for your consideration and patience. Sorry I went over.

MR. BARLAS: That's all right, thank you very much for participating this evening, Ms. Marley, and patiently waiting.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Also on our list is Aiden DeMarsey.

AIDEN DeMARSEY: Thank you for this opportunity; it's great to be able to testify on such an important process.

Let me just start off by introducing myself. I am from Evesham, New Jersey, which is in Burlington County, which is currently in the 8th Legislative District. I am the President of the Evesham Township Youth Advisory Committee, and I am currently a student at Cherokee High School in the Lenape Regional High School District.

Let me also start off by just saying I am not here for any partisan purposes or representing any certain party or their interests. I speak against partisan gerrymandering, which I found both the Turnpike and the Parkway maps do in their own respective ways. Unfortunately, that's the reality of politics that we have to face.

I am here solely tonight representing the interests of local youth in the Township of Evesham, as the President of the Youth Advisory Committee; and, just in general, the future as far as precedent goes of our town and the State of New Jersey.

Under-- I would like to speak about the Turnpike map tonight. Under the Turnpike map, Evesham Township is put into Legislative District 6, in comparison to what it currently is under, in Legislative District 8. So there are a few issues with that. The fact of the matter is that Evesham Township, as far as high schools go, is currently, again, under the Lenape Regional High School District, which is with Medford, Medford Lakes, Shamong, and Mount Laurel. When it comes to political issues such as S1, which was the school funding bill, that took away millions of dollars of funding from Evesham Township and other Lenape Regional High schools, in Evesham Township's school district and the Lenape Regional High School District. That's a severe political issue on the State level that needs a unified front of representation.

We need to have one representative for our Lenape Regional High School township school districts; otherwise it disenfranchises parents of those children who pay taxes; and furthermore it provides a severe lack of opportunity for kids, and a severe opening for the ability to have

further situations like that arise again. And it disenables us to have a unified voice in Trenton.

Simply put, we need to be put with our Lenape Regional High School districts. Evesham, furthermore, is the only town in Burlington County under the Turnpike map to be put into the 6th District; and it doesn't share many of the community values that you see with other communities in the 6th District, such as Audubon, which-- You know, Evesham and Audubon are two very different towns which don't share many values despite geographical proximity.

With that, we have to ask ourselves, what should be the focus of redistricting? And the fact of the matter is we should want to put similar towns in with each other. And for that reason, Evesham should be put, under the Turnpike map, into the 7th District. However, it would be foolish of me to not give you a suggestion.

I suggest switching Pennsauken and Merchantville, which have a similar population to Evesham, into the 6th District, which have much more shared community values with the municipalities in that District. And then taking Evesham and putting it into the 7th District. That way, communities are represented, people are represented, and then the purposes of this Commission is properly served.

Thank you again, I truly appreciate the opportunity.

MR. BARLAS: Mr. DeMarsey, thank you for participating this evening.

And I have to tell you, for someone who is involved with their high school, it sounds like, very impressive. I don't think I could have put that many sentences together when I was in high school.

MR. DeMARSEY: Thank you, truly.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, we have Fahim Abedrabbo, and the speaker designated as “Wind of the Spirit” on her screen.

F A H I M A B E D R A B B O: Secretary, thank you very much; to our Co-Chairs Jones and Barlas and our Commissioners -- many of you I know, many of you I’ve heard of -- I want to thank you this evening for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Fahim Abedrabbo. Although I serve as a local Board member, and the first Arab and Muslim American to be elected in Clifton, as a reminder, I do not speak for the Board of Ed, and I am here solely as a resident. I am a proud Arab American who was born and continues to live in Clifton.

First of all, I want to applaud Aiden because, again, as Mr. Barlas said, not too many high school students are this involved at their age and have an interest in New Jersey politics, and community social services as well.

I am here to advocate for a fair representation. With the rapid population growth driven solely by the increases in the numbers of people of color -- and I can say confidently they have enlarged concerns of racial inequality and representation.

Let me tell you an experience I have had growing up in New Jersey -- in this country. How can anyone be represented if they are forced to check an “Other” box or not answer an ethnicity affiliation? That is something I have been torn with growing up, from times of 11, 12 years

old, where I had to check a box, to today. As Ms. Amy Torres mentioned earlier about the MENA -- the Middle Eastern North African -- MENA was researched for four years by pollsters and researchers across the country, only to be rejected and turned away by the Trump Administration with no reason.

So how am I not represented or accounted for? How are people living in New Jersey supposed to say, "All right, well if I'm accounted for and I'm not represented, prove it. Where do I check? Where do I belong?" I've been working with PACC to help many Arab American communities through the State of New Jersey, in hopes that the Commission will take my community into consideration when redrawing the State's district maps. Even though our Arab American community can trace its history to its establishment with the Syrians back in the early '30s, '40s, '50s, and '60s in Paterson, we have seen a significant increase in our population over the last 30 years, giving us the ability to gain leadership positions through local government.

Like I grew up, and now I am in local service, we have youth who want to serve their communities -- not just the Arab community, but the community of New Jersey. But this cannot be done if not given the opportunity -- when districts are being drawn unfairly and misrepresented. As a reminder, the Arab American community still does not have a representation in Trenton. Just a year ago to today, we've doubled our South Asians. We gained two Muslim, but still no Arab representation in Trenton.

Although all three maps need significant work, the Unity and the Parkway maps, with some modification, do a much better job of keeping my community whole, to connect its Paterson and Clifton roots. I

would recommend trading (indiscernible) for Woodland Park to ensure my community is kept whole.

And I'll leave you with this, and I'll jump to the end. On the heels of Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter, as she stated earlier, in order to have a strong future, we have to learn from yesterday's mistakes and triumphs. While we are proud residents of New Jersey, we need to make sure our children tomorrow can look forward to feeling home when they look at their representation. Whether it's in their town, in their family, in their County, or in their State, or in their country.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, sir, for participating this evening.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the last speaker I have is the speaker designated as "Wind of the Spirit."

GLORIA E. BLANCO: Good evening. Thank you, first of all, for allowing me to speak.

My name is Gloria Elizabeth Blanco, and I work and I am also a volunteer with Wind of the Spirit, which is located in Morristown, Dover, Madison, and Plainfield.

I also want to thank you for hosting these public meetings and for releasing the map before the final meeting.

I am here to speak in regards to these maps. But before, I'll let you know about me. I live and I work in Morristown, New Jersey, which is District 25, and I am also an active member in the community. I went to Frelinghuysen Middle School in Morris Plains, I graduated from

Morristown High School. I am an active member of St. Margaret Catholic Church. I have lived in Morristown, New Jersey, for at least 20 years. So, as you can see, I know this community.

My community includes Morristown, Dover, and Wharton, which are District 25; Parsippany-Troy Hills, District 26; Rockaway, which is also District 26; and Madison, District 27. We do not have anything in common with Washington Township, Chester Township, Harding Township. The maps published do not really represent our community, especially the Parkway map. Dover, Morristown, Parsippany-Troy Hills -- we are split apart in three different districts and put together with towns that we do not have much in common.

On the other hand, Morristown, Dover, and other towns that I mentioned before, share many things in common -- including the same issues, such as being affected by gentrification; and our towns have been sold out to developers and we are being kicked out. Other similarities are that we have many communities-- Our community are basically shopping at Rockaway Mall, and we use the same trainline. Which, actually, my sister travels from Morristown to New York to get to her work.

And we cannot once again be split apart and not be represented for another 10 years. We are a very diverse community of color and we are underrepresented despite the demographic changes of the last 10 years.

Unfortunately, many legislators do not listen to us. Therefore, we need a Fair District Unity Map.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you for testifying this evening.

Madam Secretary, anybody else left out there who we didn't call upon this evening?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: I don't see anyone else, Mr. Chairman.

MR. BARLAS: Okay.

On behalf of everyone, I want to thank you all, those who participated this evening in a very robust discussion.

We will be back on Friday at 10 a.m., for another virtual session to get to those folks we were unable to get through this evening.

Chair Jones, Judge Carchman, any last words this evening?

MR. JONES: No, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you everybody for three hours -- nearly three hours of very thought provoking and impactful testimony.

JUDGE CARCHMAN: I echo what the Chairs have said. Thank you all, it's been meaningful testimony and substantive testimony, and we appreciate your coming out and participating with us.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you very much, everyone.

Have a very good evening. See you Friday.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)