



BETHEL NEW LIFE

EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS • STRENGTHENING FAMILIES • BUILDING NEIGHBORHOODS

May 27, 2011

State Representative Derrick Smith
Illinois 10th District
262-W Stratton Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

RE: Redistricting Plan

Representative Smith,

Thank you for attending Bethel New Life's fundraiser last Friday and for reaching out to us about the redistricting plan currently being discussed. As you know, Bethel New Life has long been a voice of the communities that it serves and has engaged in advocacy around issues important in our communities.

We support many of the goals of the redistricting plan:

- We agree that districts should be represented by legislators who are very familiar with the communities they represent.
- We agree that legislative district boundaries should take into account communities of interest, assuring that those interests are represented in the legislature.
- We agree that any opportunity for redistricting should provide for the best representation for local residents and for voices of local residents to be heard.

We recognize that census numbers and demographics changes in communities across Illinois, including those that Bethel New Life serves, in part drives the redistricting plan. **However, we are concerned about the loss of the overall number of legislative voices representing communities that are underserved, poor, and who generally do not have the same access to other avenues for their voices being heard or having their needs represented in the legislative process.**

It is especially critical during challenging budget times that there are many and powerful legislative voices to represent the needs of communities who are otherwise often voiceless in the process. A redistricting plan to achieve the points outlined above while guarding the few but critical legislative voices representing these challenged districts is necessary for Illinois and is, we believe, in the best interest of the people that the 10th district represents.

We believe that the current redistricting plan only partially achieves these goals and we ask that you take these points into consideration as you work with your legislative colleagues to finalize a plan. Thank you again for your representation of the interests of the communities served by Bethel New Life.

Sincerely,

Lori R. Vallelunga, Ph.D.
President & CEO

**Additional Submissions
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