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BEFORE THE  
ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE HEARING

Hearing held on the 11th day of April, 2021,  
between the hours of 1:49 p.m. and 2:53 p.m. by Zoom video  
conferencing.

Reported by: Ms. Jamie Jo Kinder, CSR 084-003306  
Alaris Litigation Services  
15 S. Old State Capitol Plaza  
Springfield, Illinois 62701



1 (Commenced at 1:49 p.m.)

2 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Good afternoon,  
3 everyone. Let me just begin by apologizing. There was a  
4 little bit of technical, on my part, issues, that I was  
5 having, but we're good to start.

6 So the House Committee on Redistricting shall  
7 come to order. I'm State Representative Lisa Hernandez.  
8 I'm a member of the Redistricting Committee and will be  
9 chairing today's committee.

10 Let me start by welcoming some of our local  
11 representatives that have joined us today. We have  
12 Representative Margaret Croke. We have Representative  
13 Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz, Representative Robyn Gabel,  
14 representative Lindsey LaPointe, Representative Denyse  
15 Stoneback. Let me see. Representative Eva-Dina Delgado.  
16 I hope I'm -- I think I got everyone on my end.

17 Leader Butler, would you like to recognize  
18 your members as well?

19 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: Thank you,  
20 Madam Chair. My name is Tim Butler. I'm the State  
21 Representative from the 87th District. I cover the  
22 district smack dab in the middle of the state. Joining us  
23 on the Republican side today are Leader Ryan Spain from  
24 Peoria and Leader Avery Bourne from Morrisonville. So

1 happy to be on here today.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GABEL: Representative  
3 Hernandez, Kelly Cassidy is on as well.

4 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Thank you for  
5 joining us, Representative Cassidy.

6 Okay. So how we are going to go about things  
7 is I'm going to just make a statement right now, ask Leader  
8 Butler if he would also. After that, then we will follow  
9 with a small presentation from staff and then we will begin  
10 our witness testimonies.

11 So let me start by thanking everyone who has  
12 chosen to participate in today's hearing. Your insight and  
13 participation is as important as ever as we begin the  
14 redistricting process under unprecedented circumstances.

15 The United States and Illinois Constitutions  
16 require the general assembly to redraw political boundaries  
17 every ten years to account for population shifts. These  
18 hearings are a part of that process. House Democrats are  
19 indicated -- are dedicated to transparency and public  
20 participation in the redistricting process. While state  
21 law requires a minimum of four public hearings throughout  
22 the state, our Committee intends to hold far more and  
23 present additional avenues for public participation.

24 Our goal is to hear from as many people as

1 possible and to gain as much information as possible about  
2 the diverse communities of our state. Our staff has been  
3 making hundreds of phone calls to encourage participation  
4 in these upcoming hearings. Those who wish to participate  
5 should be given an opportunity period.

6 We are holding a series of virtual and  
7 in-person hearings throughout the state. Early last month  
8 we announced a schedule of 23 hearings before proposing a  
9 redistricting plan.

10 For comparison, in 2011, the House  
11 Redistricting Committee held 17 hearings in total. While  
12 we are guided in these -- in this endeavor by the United  
13 States Constitution, the Federal Voting Rights Act, the  
14 Illinois Constitution and the Illinois Voting Rights Act,  
15 we are also interested in any relevant demographic  
16 information, such as social, political, economic, religious  
17 or any other characteristics that are unique to your  
18 community.

19 We want to hear your specific views on any  
20 social, political, economic or religious interests commonly  
21 held in the community, any specific interest groups that  
22 exist, any concerns you have regarding the current  
23 boundaries, or alternatively, what works well about the  
24 current boundaries and suggestions for the drawing of new

1 boundaries. In short, we want to hear any testimony that  
2 is relevant to the drawing of our new political boundaries.

3 This year, for the first time, Illinois  
4 residents will be able to participate in the process from  
5 the comfort of their own homes, including through remote  
6 participation in these hearings and by drawing their own  
7 maps via website, and you can do that through the public  
8 drawing -- it's a public drawing portal available at  
9 [ilhousedems.com/redistricting](http://ilhousedems.com/redistricting), which allows any Illinois  
10 residents to draw districts and share those maps with the  
11 Committee for consideration.

12 The public may also submit written testimony  
13 or other public comment to the Committee by e-mail at  
14 [redistrictingcommittee](mailto:redistrictingcommittee). -- I'm sorry --  
15 [redistrictingcommittee@hds.ilga.gov](mailto:redistrictingcommittee@hds.ilga.gov). All written  
16 testimony, public comments and maps submitted to the  
17 Committee will be made publically available at [ilga.gov](http://ilga.gov) and  
18 [ilhousedems.com/redistricting](http://ilhousedems.com/redistricting). Transcripts for the  
19 Committee's hearings will also be uploaded to those sites.

20 As for today, we will begin with a short slide  
21 show presentation. Following that brief presentation, we  
22 have a number of witnesses who have indicated a desire to  
23 testify. If you have written testimony prepared, we would  
24 ask that you submit that testimony to us and just briefly

1 summarize it in your oral presentation.

2 So now I will ask Leader Butler if you have  
3 any words as well.

4 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: Thank you,  
5 Madam Chair. I just wanted to say -- give my thanks also  
6 for -- it looks like we scheduled some additional regional  
7 hearings that I saw popped up on the House website over the  
8 weekend or Friday for, it looks like, Eastern and Western  
9 Illinois. So I appreciate -- and Kankakee as well. So I  
10 appreciate you listening to my concerns about that.

11 I just look forward to what the folks from  
12 North Chicago, North Cook have to say today. I've got a  
13 lot of our friendly colleagues from the north side, it  
14 looks, on here. So glad to have them on here on this  
15 Sunday afternoon. Even though the north siders are down  
16 five to one right now, which I guess we're not missing  
17 anything with the Cubs game going on. Thank you, Madam  
18 Chair.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Leader Butler.  
20 So next, we will begin with a short slide presentation. So  
21 who is our staff person? Katherine, I believe.

22 CLERK ALLIE McNAMARA: It will be me today,  
23 Chair Hernandez.

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Go right ahead.

1 CLERK ALLIE McNAMARA: Thank you.

2 All right. Sorry. I'm having some technical  
3 difficulties here. All right. Can everyone see the  
4 PowerPoint? I know it's not in present mode. Okay. I'll  
5 just do it this way. Okay. Okay.

6 Hi, everybody. My name is Allie McNamara.  
7 That's A-L-L-I-E M-c-N-A-M-A-R-A. I'm an employee with  
8 the Illinois House of Representatives, and I'm here to give  
9 a brief overview of the State's redistricting procedure.

10 I'll briefly discuss the background of  
11 redistricting and the redistricting process here in  
12 Illinois. I will also be going over federal and state  
13 redistricting requirements and guidelines. Finally, we  
14 will be looking at what preliminary data reveals about the  
15 population trends in the state and in the region.

16 Redistricting is the process that ensures all  
17 Illinois residents are afforded equal representation in the  
18 State Legislature and Federal Congress as guaranteed by the  
19 U.S. Constitution. The U.S. Supreme Court held a series of  
20 rulings in the 1960s that Congressional and State  
21 Legislative districts in each state must be of  
22 approximately equal population, establishing the principle  
23 of one person/one vote. As a result, the states redraw  
24 their congressional and state districts every ten years to



1 reflect changes in population.

2 The timeline for redrawing the legislative map  
3 is based on the Illinois Constitution. The Constitution  
4 gives the Illinois Legislature the initial responsibility  
5 of passing the new legislative map. Both the State House  
6 and the State Senate must pass a plan, which then must be  
7 signed by the governor.

8 If a new map does not go into effect by the  
9 Constitutional deadline of June 30th, responsibility for  
10 creating a new map passes from the legislature to a  
11 legislative redistricting commission. The commission would  
12 consist of eight members, with two each appointed by the  
13 legislative leaders, and no more than four from the same  
14 political party. A majority vote of five or more  
15 commission members will constitute final approval of a new  
16 map.

17 However, if the Commission does not agree to a  
18 new map by September 1st, the Illinois Supreme Court will  
19 submit two names, one from each party, to the Illinois  
20 Secretary of State, who will then choose one name at random  
21 to serve as the ninth member of the Commission. Five of  
22 the nine members of the Commission must agree to a plan no  
23 later than October 5th.

24 In order to understand the process of creating

1 new districts, we must look at some legal guiding  
2 principles. First among these is equal population.  
3 Congressional Districts must be nearly equal in population,  
4 while State Districts must be substantially equal in  
5 population. Federal and State Law also requires that all  
6 districts must be contiguous, which means that all parts of  
7 the District must be next to each other unless connected by  
8 water.

9           Annexations and unincorporated areas and  
10 municipalities and counties sometimes mean communities are  
11 discontinuous. However, Congressional and State Districts  
12 must be adjacent or connected at all points.

13           A more difficult requirement to define is  
14 compactness. There are at least 30 different scientific  
15 ways to measure how compact a district is, but no statute  
16 or court precedent identifies standard criteria of  
17 compactness.

18           In theory, compactness focuses on the shape of  
19 a district's boundaries, how spread out -- how spread out a  
20 district is from a central core or where the district's  
21 population center of gravity is. In practice, compactness  
22 is hindered by the geography and on-the-ground realities.  
23 So often the interpretation of compactness involves more  
24 than just a visual test.

1 Illinois is one of 14 states that nests its  
2 House Districts, also called Representative Districts,  
3 inside one of its Senate Districts, also called Legislative  
4 Districts. Mapmakers will also look where possible to  
5 follow existing political and geographical boundaries in  
6 ways that maximize the communities' opportunity to have its  
7 interests represented.

8 As you know, however, municipality, township,  
9 natural geographic boundaries are not always compact or  
10 contiguous.

11 By studying population data and holding public  
12 hearings like this one to listen to the thoughts of  
13 residents across the state, lawmakers look to identify what  
14 are known as communities of interest. A community of  
15 interest is a group of people concentrated in a geographic  
16 area where socially, culturally, ethnically, economically,  
17 religiously or otherwise alike can be joined in a district  
18 to most effectively have their voices heard. The factors  
19 contributing to any particular community of interest will  
20 vary throughout the state.

21 Federal law requires redistricting plans to  
22 respect minority representation. The principles of the  
23 Federal Voting Rights Act are in place to prevent the  
24 reduction of opportunities for minority populations to

1 participate equally in the electoral process. However,  
2 districts cannot be drawn solely on the basis of race.

3 Illinois law also protects representation of  
4 racial and language minority groups. The Illinois Voting  
5 Rights Act helps to prevent minority fracturing or dividing  
6 a concentration of minorities among two or more districts  
7 by requiring mapmakers to consider creating crossover  
8 districts, coalition districts or influence districts.

9 A crossover district is one in which large  
10 minority groups may elect a candidate of its choice with  
11 help from the voters of the majority group.

12 A coalition district brings together multiple  
13 racial or language minority groups to elect a candidate of  
14 their choice.

15 An influence district also allows a group to  
16 influence an election outcome without being the majority  
17 population in a district. These state law requirements  
18 come into play only after compliance with Federal Law and  
19 U.S. and State Constitutional requirements on  
20 redistricting.

21 In addition, the law ensures transparency and  
22 public participation by requiring public hearings across  
23 the state, one of which we're having right now. At the end  
24 of the presentation, we will display an e-mail address on

1 the screen that Chair Hernandez has already provided, where  
2 you can submit your ideas. The Committee is also accepting  
3 written testimony today.

4 Now that we've covered the redistricting  
5 process, let's discuss what data shows about Illinois  
6 population.

7 The U.S. Census Bureau has delayed the release  
8 of much of the decennial census data by more than six  
9 months until this fall. However, the U.S. Census Bureau's  
10 annual population estimate shows some trends that can help  
11 inform the work ahead.

12 The Census 2019 population estimate shows an  
13 overall decline in state population over the past decade.  
14 There are, however, areas that project how population  
15 gains. Communities with the largest population by  
16 percentage increase since 2010 are Kendall, Monroe,  
17 Champaign and Kane Counties. Demographically speaking, the  
18 state's White population is projected to decline, while  
19 African-American populations statewide will likely see a  
20 smaller overall decline. The Hispanic and Asian population  
21 across the state are projected to see growth.

22 Locally, Cook County is projected to see a  
23 modest decrease in population. The county's White and  
24 African-American populations stand to decline, while Asian

1 and Hispanic populations will likely increase.

2 Thank you all for your attention today and for  
3 coming out to share your thoughts. As the Chair mentioned,  
4 you will be able to find testimony from this and other  
5 hearings on ilga.gov and on ilhousedems.com/redistricting.

6 The redistricting website offers additional  
7 ways to engage with the process, including our public  
8 drawing portal where you can draw and submit your own  
9 district maps. You can send further written testimony and  
10 suggestions to the Committee anytime by emailing  
11 redistrictingcommittee@hds.ilga.gov. Thanks.

12 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Allie.

13 Okay. So there is a total of two panels that  
14 we're having today, at least I have listed here, with a  
15 total of four witnesses.

16 Leader Butler, if you're okay, I'm going to  
17 ask if we can --

18 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: Four total  
19 witnesses?

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I have a total of four  
21 witnesses.

22 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: Sure. Do you  
23 just want to do them all at the same time, if that works?

24 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. All right. Sounds

1 good.

2                   Okay. So the first panel is just one person.  
3 I'm going to apologize ahead of time if I don't say your  
4 name correctly. But what I will ask of witnesses is to  
5 make sure that you spell out your name for the purposes of  
6 the record. Sometimes the whole name doesn't show up on  
7 the computer.

8                   So we'll start with -- Let's see. We have  
9 Shlomo Soroka from Agudath Israel of Illinois. Shlomo?  
10 Are you on?

11                   SHLOMO SOROKA: Yes.

12                   CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. There you go. And  
13 pardon me if I didn't say it correctly, but please proceed.

14                   SHLOMO SOROKA: You were spot on. It's Shlomo  
15 Soroka. You got it right. It's spelled S-H-L-O-M-O  
16 S-O -- last name is S-O-R-O-K-A. And, yes, I am Director  
17 of Government Affairs for Agudath Israel of Illinois, an  
18 umbrella grass roots organization representing the  
19 interests of the Orthodox Jewish community.

20                   So Chairman Hernandez, Leader Butler and other  
21 members of this Committee, thank you for allowing me to  
22 share my testimony today.

23                   Our Constitution and these hearings recognize  
24 the need to consider communities of interest, as mentioned

1 before, in the mapmaking process to ensure that they have  
2 representation and a voice in the government. To achieve  
3 that goal, it was mentioned that ethnic and racial  
4 communities, as well as other communities of interest, have  
5 often been grouped together in the same legislative  
6 districts.

7           The Orthodox Jewish community, which I  
8 represent, is one that unfortunately is often overlooked as  
9 a community of interest, despite our unique needs and  
10 interests. This community, which has grown significantly  
11 over the last decade, is primarily concentrated in the West  
12 Ridge area of Chicago, spilling over into Skokie and  
13 Lincolnwood.

14           We have unique and nuanced views on public  
15 policies that impact liberties, education and social  
16 services, which I will elaborate on soon. The community  
17 infrastructure, socioeconomic opposition, priorities of  
18 interest reflect those unique views and characteristics.

19           I want to share a bit of historical  
20 background and the current demographics. The Orthodox  
21 Jewish community has been a significant part of Illinois  
22 social fabric really since the early 1800s. In the latter  
23 half of the 19th century, approximately 100,000 Orthodox  
24 Jewish immigrants all settled in the Maxwell Street area,



1 and they were concentrated within two square miles. Many  
2 worked as pushcart peddlers, shopkeepers in the Maxwell  
3 Market.

4 And in the 1920s, they began to migrate into  
5 Lawndale, Albany Park, and then in the 1950s they started  
6 moving north to what we call West Rogers Park and Skokie  
7 where new Jewish day schools were established.

8 Until that point in time, the lack of a strong  
9 Jewish day school system made it very challenging for  
10 families to raise their children as Orthodox Jews, and  
11 therefore, a staggering number of a hundred thousand Jews  
12 living in one little area, most of those Orthodox Jews and  
13 their children assimilated or moved out of the region.

14 In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Jewish  
15 leaders understood that a strong Jewish day school  
16 infrastructure was needed to rebuild and to ensure the  
17 continuity of our culture and the integrity of our faith.  
18 With this new system, the numbers of Jews that identified  
19 as Orthodox began to rebound and experience a resurgence.

20 In the 1960s, the largest Jewish  
21 neighborhoods, including Jews of other denominations, were  
22 still in West Rogers Park and Skokie. However, over the  
23 last 70 years, most Jews have suburbanized and migrated  
24 out, but the Orthodox Jewish community has remained in

1 these areas and has grown with really an exponential growth  
2 over, I would say, the last 15 years or so. In 2010, a JUF  
3 survey estimated there to be 21,000 Orthodox Jews in the  
4 area. Current estimates put that number at approximately  
5 30,000.

6 Over the last decade, enrollment in the  
7 Orthodox Jewish day schools has increased by over  
8 50 percent. Six new schools have opened, and five new  
9 major synagogues have been built. There are also five new  
10 Kolos. Kolos are like Sundays for adult Kolo study and  
11 benefit training, but more importantly for this Committee,  
12 they are the greatest catalysts in Jewish -- Orthodox  
13 Jewish community growth.

14 In the past five years alone, at least -- more  
15 than 300 families have moved into the community, over 30  
16 retail stores have opened. Our neighborhoods are not only  
17 the center of Illinois' Orthodox Jewish community, but are  
18 the epicenter of the Midwest Orthodox Jews.

19 Getting a little bit into the socioeconomics  
20 of the community, it's important to note that we tend to  
21 have large families. Ten-plus household members are fairly  
22 common. With many children and the expenses associated  
23 with Orthodox Jewish living, many Orthodox Jewish  
24 breadwinners, who are maybe even in the top ten, for sure

1 the top 20 percent of breadwinners in the country, still  
2 struggle to afford the basics, including food items, as  
3 Kosher food tends to be more expensive.

4 Poverty in the community, unfortunately, is  
5 quite common. Over 40 percent of the children in our  
6 schools who participate in the national school lunch  
7 program are on free and reduced lunch. The key to the  
8 additional financial obligations that our families have,  
9 over 90 percent receive some subsidy. Most of those that  
10 don't qualify for the programs based on federal poverty  
11 guidelines are still struggling financially.

12 Due to the need to be within walking distance  
13 of our synagogues and near our schools and Kosher food  
14 outlets, we are all in the same areas. So there's no rich  
15 neighborhoods, poor neighborhoods. The wealthy, the middle  
16 class and the poor all live side-by-side, attend the same  
17 synagogues, send their children to the same schools. As  
18 such, there are many poor families that get overlooked by  
19 government programs that are targeting low-income  
20 neighborhoods.

21 Also regarding -- Another aspect of the  
22 community concern is safety and security. Our community  
23 has really great needs in this area because Orthodox Jews  
24 are visually identifiable from afar and are exposed -- are

1 more exposed on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays when travel  
2 by cars is prohibited. With anti-Semitism on the rise,  
3 both globally and locally, and many recent violent attacks  
4 specifically targeting Orthodox Jews, this is a real  
5 concern.

6 I also want to share a little bit about  
7 Orthodox Jewish religious culture and our community  
8 organizations. We gather for communal prayers and  
9 religious studies at least two to three times a day. We  
10 have more than 60 synagogues in our neighborhoods. I'm  
11 guessing that's the highest concentration of places of  
12 worship in the state. We also have a plethora of nonprofit  
13 organizations that provide in the way of social services  
14 with cultural sensitivity. Our schools are located across  
15 24 buildings.

16 The community's close-knit nature, culture of  
17 giving, methods of communication and strong infrastructure  
18 allows us to mobilize quickly and effectively for any  
19 important appointment, be it a political engagement,  
20 galvanizing volunteers for emergency initiatives or really  
21 to address any issue, we are able to reach virtually the  
22 entire community even on short notice.

23 The collaborative spirit that is so prevalent  
24 among our community leaders and organizations allows us to

1 be nimble and effective in ways that few others can  
2 duplicate. This infrastructure creates an improvement as  
3 well as potential for public/private partnerships.  
4 Examples include Hatzalah, our volunteer first responder  
5 ambulance service that complements the greater Chicago/Cook  
6 County EMS.

7           Feeding Kids, our pandemic food box program,  
8 currently provides over a quarter of a million Kosher meals  
9 a month in the Chicago area to both Jewish and non-Jewish  
10 families suffering from food insecurity.

11           And our new volunteer-operated vaccine clinic,  
12 we partnered with community-based organizations and  
13 government agencies and have vaccinated almost 10,000  
14 hard-to-reach vulnerable and elderly people.

15           The top issue that our community faces today  
16 is education. As I mentioned before, we have a network of  
17 over 20 schools in the greater Chicago area with well over  
18 5,000, probably close to 6,000 students. We have the  
19 largest Jewish school in the west, and our school system  
20 tracks families from across the country.

21           Our approach to education has a rich history  
22 and has been adapted to prepare our children for a  
23 successful life in the modern world without compromising on  
24 a 2000-year tradition. Our schools produce graduates that

1 have gone on to have successful careers in virtually every  
2 sector while remaining true to their heritage.

3 We believe in a strong and well-funded public  
4 educational system, but for the vast majority of our  
5 children, public school is simply not an option. As  
6 history has painfully taught us, and as I have mentioned  
7 before, our very existence is in peril without a strong  
8 Jewish day school system.

9 There are some other issues that are unique to  
10 the Orthodox Jewish community as well. The new issues are  
11 always coming up that affect the Orthodox Jewish community  
12 in ways that aren't relevant to other communities. A  
13 memorable example was a bill that allowed for Sunday  
14 burials, allowed Orthodox Jews to uphold the traditional  
15 dignity and respect of Jewish decedents. Since it was  
16 legislation pushed for by the Orthodox Jewish community,  
17 Governor Thompson famously held the signing at the Telshe  
18 Yeshiva of Chicago, which is like the Harvard of Midwest  
19 Jewish theologians.

20 Other recent examples include a bill that  
21 ensure that milk that wasn't Kosher be labeled as such, a  
22 bill to allow first our responders to use oscillating  
23 lights and sirens, and I believe those are currently  
24 assigned to committees that would make Daylight Savings

1 Time permanent all year round. With Jewish prayer time  
2 dependent on sunrise and sunset, this is an issue that  
3 could potentially force many observant Jews to choose  
4 between religious life and their livelihoods.

5 As I mentioned earlier, it's estimated that  
6 approximately 30,000 Jewish Illinoisans identified as  
7 orthodox, with most living in the same geographic area.  
8 Much of this area is contained within the boundaries of the  
9 16th House District represented by Representative  
10 Stoneback. Approximately 20 percent of our Orthodox Jewish  
11 households, however, are in the 17th House District  
12 represented by Gong-Gershowitz's district, and about  
13 eight percent in the 15th District, despite -- this  
14 split-up despite their continuity, communal region and  
15 independence.

16 Some district lines run right through the  
17 heart of our neighborhoods in Skokie and in Peterson Park,  
18 especially the boundary that divides the 16th and 15th  
19 Districts. In fact, where I'm sitting right now, I'm  
20 sitting in the John D'Amico's district right across -- and  
21 I'm in the heart of the Orthodox Jewish neighborhood, and  
22 right across the street is the 16th District. Same  
23 neighborhood.

24 In our experience, being a significant

1 constituency in the district is vital to having  
2 representation in the legislature that would be a champion  
3 for our issues. In any new map, we would like to see our  
4 community consolidated as much as possible.

5 To be clear, having an Orthodox Jew as our  
6 elected representative is not what's important to us. What  
7 is important to us is to be grouped together so that our  
8 elected official can champion our cause with acute  
9 awareness and determination. And we have seen from  
10 experience that some of our most effective elected  
11 officials have been those that are not part of the Orthodox  
12 Jewish community.

13 We are hopeful that improvements will be made;  
14 however, we are very concerned about the possibility of  
15 experiencing the opposite. Our community is at risk of  
16 being divided to the point of political irrelevance. I  
17 respectfully ask you on behalf of my community to ensure  
18 that does not happen and to make the greatest effort  
19 possible to further consolidate us so that we can be heard  
20 among the voices of the people.

21 Thank you. And if there's any questions, I'm  
22 happy to address those.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Yes. Thank you. Thank  
24 you, Mr. Soroka.



1                   Next, we're going to move to the second panel.  
2    I have three people on here from the -- all three from the  
3    Muslim Civic Coalition. That's Dilara Sayeed, Deena Habbal  
4    and Reema Kamran. Dilara, would you like to start, please?

5                   REEMA KAMRAN: Thank you, Chair Hernandez.  
6    Dilara, unfortunately, was not able to make it today, but  
7    myself, Reema Kamran, and that is R-E-E-M-A K-A-M-R-A-N,  
8    and my colleague Fatima Mohammed -- El-Mohammed, are on  
9    representing the Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition.

10                  I will just begin with your permission, and  
11    hopefully we can answer any questions you may have.

12                  CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: And my hope is that.  
13    Okay.

14                  REEMA KAMRAN: My name -- Thank you so much,  
15    Chair Hernandez. Hello, Representative Butler, and honored  
16    legislators. Thank you so much for inviting us to share  
17    our testimony. My name is Reema Kamran, and I'm with the  
18    Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition. We are a coalition of  
19    over 150 partners and allies of all races, ethnicities,  
20    class, faiths and backgrounds. Our focus is ensuring that  
21    policies made for us are made with us, and redistricting is  
22    one critical piece of this.

23                  We appreciate -- We appreciate Change Illinois  
24    for letting us know about these hearings, and we have been

1 fortunate to be a part of these hearings for the past  
2 couple of weeks. The Coalition recommends that legislators  
3 make sure that census data, plus community organizations  
4 and leaders and other data, including ACS, are engaged in  
5 redistricting. We hope that the process is transparent,  
6 inclusive and clear.

7 In Illinois, as mentioned right before my --  
8 our testimony, we have communities that did not exist in  
9 2010, others that were never vocal about their needs and  
10 still others who have grown in the last ten years. And our  
11 invisible under-represented communities fit into many of  
12 these criteria.

13 I would like to share a little data with you,  
14 and then my colleague will share about what's happening in  
15 neighborhoods across this area.

16 The American story is diverse. Muslim  
17 communities across our nation are among the most diverse  
18 faith group. Though we are not at the Illinois Muslim  
19 Civic Coalition a religious organization, our work is --  
20 our work is informed by our faith, and we want to highlight  
21 that race, class and faith intersect, and when  
22 redistricting, these are critical aspects of a community to  
23 take into consideration.

24 Those who identify as Muslim identify as

1 African-American. As you can see by the chart on the  
2 screen, almost -- almost 28 percent Asian, about 25 percent  
3 White, Arab, Latino, and African immigrant. This is a  
4 story that has been a part of the American experience  
5 for -- since the 1600s, and it is a story that many of us  
6 do not know because as is often with invisible communities,  
7 they do their work, they focus on following the rules and  
8 striving towards the American dream.

9 In my own family, we have Arab, Pakistani,  
10 Indian and Latino members. I immigrated to the United  
11 States over 20 years ago and have been an active member of  
12 my community ever since. And as an immigrant, I'm aware of  
13 the challenges, the fears and the hopes shared by many  
14 hard-to-count communities that our organization was  
15 involved in making sure were a part of the census, and we  
16 all share the efforts that we are striving towards the  
17 American dream.

18 Illinois is one of the most diverse states in  
19 the United States of America. It ranks in the 20 -- top  
20 25 percent in racial diversity and the top 10 percent in  
21 religious diversity. It has some of the largest numbers of  
22 Polish, Irish, African-American, Latino, Catholic and Hindu  
23 residents in the nation, and Illinois has the largest per  
24 capita American population in America. These residents

1 live, work, play, pray and serve our cities and counties.  
2 They work for a better Illinois, but have zero  
3 representation in Illinois. And as you can see from this  
4 chart, we beat out Virginia, New York, New Jersey, Texas  
5 and even Michigan.

6 So representation matters, and we want to make  
7 sure that those who are Muslims and identify as  
8 African-American, Asian, Middle Eastern, Latino, African  
9 immigrant and White, that they are recognized, as they  
10 represent a critical number of Illinois residents but yet  
11 have zero state representation.

12 Our hope as the Illinois Muslim Civic  
13 Coalition is to provide maps by April 30th for  
14 consideration, and we have three "asks" to put forth in  
15 front of the Redistricting Committee.

16 Please do not push responsibility back to 2030  
17 to provide representation to communities who have zero  
18 representation or are under-represented.

19 Arab communities are identified as White in  
20 the census. This is incorrect. Please use census data,  
21 ACS data, meetings with community leaders and community  
22 partnerships who know the racial, faith and ethnic  
23 demographic across ten counties and who know their  
24 communities.

1                   And ensure that 2021 maps reflect the  
2   diversity of race, ethnicities and faith all across  
3   Illinois.

4                   Representation matters, and we know that it's  
5   a lengthy and complicated process, but we pray and hope  
6   that the results from these -- from these hearings and from  
7   this effort are well drawn out and equitable districts  
8   which do not marginalize any community and instead protect  
9   the proper allocation of funds, resources and create  
10   equitable representation for all Illinois residents.

11                  I know we've met many of the representatives  
12   throughout the many hearings that we've been a part of, but  
13   our goal, again, is to create maps that we can share that  
14   show the diversity of our community as a whole.

15                  I will pause here, and I will invite Fatima  
16   El-Mohammed, who is a community and civic leader to share  
17   about her community and share what's been happening in her  
18   neighborhood. Fatima, I think you're on.

19                  FATIMA EL-MOHAMMED: Yes, I'm on. Yeah. So  
20   good morning and peace be on to you. My name is Fatima.  
21   I'm from the Nigerian Islamic Association. At the same  
22   time, I'm from both Guyana and Nigeria. My parents are  
23   from both sides.

24                  So as a Muslim, I represent both Guyana and

1 Nigeria. We have both Muslims and non-Muslims. We have --  
2 kind of community, we are very diverse. We welcome any  
3 kind of ethnicity, and I realize that we are not really  
4 recognized. We are in a small neighborhood in Sheridan and  
5 Orland Park, but not a lot of people really recognize the  
6 Nigerian community, so I came here today as a  
7 representative of the Nigerian association to represent so  
8 you can hear our voice. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you very much,  
10 Fatima and Reema, for your presentation.

11 We have one other speaker who has been added,  
12 Mayor Daniel Biss. I see that you're on. Good to see you.  
13 I hope all is well. So, Mayor, you go right ahead.

14 All I will ask you if you could take a moment  
15 and just submit a witness slip, if you will.

16 MAYOR-ELECT DANIEL BISS: Yes. Thank you,  
17 Madam Chair. It's great to see you also. Thank you to you  
18 and to Representative Butler and to the Committee. And I  
19 apologize for not having filed a witness slip on time, but  
20 I did just file one a moment ago, so hopefully that came  
21 through, and sorry if I messed up any of the  
22 behind-the-scenes bureaucratic stuff.

23 My name is Daniel Biss, spelled D-A-N-I-E-L  
24 B-I-S-S. I'm not the mayor at this time. I'm the

1 mayor-elect of the City of Evanston. So I'll take off as  
2 certainly before this map that's currently being discussed  
3 goes into effect.

4 I've seen that I'm joined on this Zoom by a  
5 few in-coming members of city council, Bobby Burns, who  
6 will be the 5th Ward Alderman, and Devon Reid, who will be  
7 the 8th Ward Alderman. I don't know if they're interested  
8 in speaking, but I know their points of view would  
9 certainly be valuable.

10 I very much appreciate the chance to weigh in  
11 quickly on what I know is an enormously difficult process  
12 with a tremendous number of pressures coming from all  
13 sides.

14 Evanston is a community that is, in many  
15 respects, unique. Of course, we're bordered to the south  
16 by a much, much larger city. We're bordered to the north  
17 by cities that are -- municipalities that are both less  
18 racially diverse and less economically diverse than are we,  
19 and we're bordered to the west by communities that don't  
20 have a lakefront, which is, of course, a really critical  
21 asset of ours and one that brings a whole manner of  
22 critical public policy questions.

23 And so we're, in many respects, unique, and  
24 for that reason we view this map as important for our

1 future. In short, we're pretty happy with the map that we  
2 have.

3 So first of all, we have three  
4 representatives, Representatives Gabel, Cassidy and  
5 Gong-Gershowitz. Having three different people represent  
6 portions of our city gives us the opportunity to have  
7 relationships with a number of different policymakers,  
8 which we find helpful.

9 On the other hand, because we are a city that  
10 has somewhat unique needs and priorities as compared with  
11 the communities that border us, having the great majority  
12 of Evanston in a single district, that's to say the 18th  
13 District represented by Leader Gabel, is also helpful. It  
14 ensures that our priorities as a city will be heard loud  
15 and clear by a member of the House and by the senator who  
16 represents that district as well.

17 So we would ask that those two qualities to  
18 the extent possible be replicated in the next map. In  
19 other words, that we -- we're more than happy to be divided  
20 and have a number of different representatives who we can  
21 talk to, but we would like to have a big majority of  
22 Evanston in a single district so that there's a single  
23 House member who is kind of a natural go-to.

24 The only other thing, which is perhaps the



1 most important thing that I want to talk about, is the  
2 historic nature of Evanston's black community. We have a  
3 black community that is longstanding in its history,  
4 with -- rich in its culture. There are many, many  
5 generational families that have been here for a long time  
6 who have been engaged in civil rights struggles, struggles  
7 with the City of Evanston itself unfortunately, struggles  
8 with Northwest University, struggles to desegregate our  
9 school system and our healthcare system and our Y and  
10 others. And that is a rich and vibrant community that I  
11 think really benefits significantly from having a single  
12 representative.

13                   And so to the extent possible, I would ask in  
14 as strong as possible terms that you try to preserve the  
15 Evanston African-American community in a single-housed  
16 district.

17                   I don't know the math that you guys use to  
18 determine what accounts as an influence community. There  
19 may -- The African-American community in Evanston may not  
20 meet that numerical threshold to kind of automatically be  
21 concerned as a community of interest that's capable of  
22 being an influence community. But it is a community with a  
23 unique history, a critical set of needs and a community  
24 that, quite frankly, for many generations has been

1 basically an afterthought by way too many public bodies  
2 resulting in systemic and generational disinvestment.

3 And so again, to the extent that our  
4 African-American community can be put in a single  
5 Representative district, we think that would be enormously  
6 beneficial to ensure that equitable policies made going  
7 forward by the General Assembly.

8 So with that, I very much appreciate the  
9 opportunity to address the Committee, and thank you for  
10 your hard work on this difficult topic, and of course, I  
11 would be very happy to answer any questions anyone might  
12 have.

13 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Mayor-Elect  
14 Biss. Thank you for your testimony.

15 Leader Butler, I do have a couple of people  
16 that I'm just going to ask if they are looking to testify  
17 as well. We do have also Alderman-Elect Bobby Burns. And  
18 do I have Gloria Callica on as well? I hope I said that  
19 right.

20 ALDERMAN-ELECT BOBBY BURNS: Hello, this is  
21 Bobby Burns. I don't know if I should go first or the  
22 order.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Go right ahead.

24 ALDERMAN-ELECT BOBBY BURNS: Okay. Thank you,

1 Madam Chair, and everyone else for the opportunity to  
2 speak. I'll be brief because Mayor-Elect Biss did an  
3 excellent job, but I wanted to speak specifically to  
4 this -- the historic African community section of the 5th  
5 Ward, which I'll have the pleasure of representing sometime  
6 in May when we're sworn in.

7           That this section, you know, roughly  
8 influences or impacts, I should say, maybe 600 registered  
9 voters who -- so the majority minority community. We also  
10 have language minority households in that area as well, and  
11 instead of being in the 18th District, in that kind of  
12 majority district that we have representing us in Evanston,  
13 they are in the 17th District currently.

14           It is a community of interest. They share a  
15 lot of commonality, both ethnically, but also politically.  
16 You know, everybody in that area is in the 5th Ward.  
17 Everybody in that area is a resident of Evanston. Every  
18 middle school student attends the same middle school.

19           They also have a water pump station that was  
20 recently installed to help us kind of deliver water to our  
21 surrounding cities, and it is kind of an ongoing issue  
22 potentially for air pollution. Some of the residents  
23 talked about property damage that may have -- property  
24 damage that may have resulted from the construction of the

1 water pump station. This issue deals with ongoing issues  
2 of community violence, property taxes obviously, and  
3 overall, just the cost of living in Evanston is different  
4 some of the neighboring areas.

5 Flooding in this area is common on property  
6 because some of the alleys don't have proper drainage and  
7 concreting installed.

8 They attend largely the same churches, again  
9 the same schools, all in the same ward. And I do think it  
10 is a community of interest that would benefit from being in  
11 one 18th District so that if they ever choose to organize  
12 politically and build coalitions, they are able to do that  
13 with their neighbors who they share a common interest with  
14 a bit more than the neighbors in the 17th District.

15 So again, I'll keep this testimony brief.  
16 Thank you so much for allowing me to speak.

17 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you for that.

18 And, Ms. Callica, Gloria.

19 GLORIA CALLICA: Yes.

20 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Sorry about that.

21 GLORIA CALLICA: That's okay. I'm just an  
22 interested citizen. I didn't plan to speak.

23 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay.

24 GLORIA CALLICA: I'm very happy to listen in

1 on this and hope that this results in a much fairer map  
2 than we've had. Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you for that. It  
4 all counts.

5 Okay. So we will now go next to questions.

6 REPRESENTATIVE GABEL: Chairwoman, there is  
7 a -- Devon Reid is an alderman-elect, and I saw his name on  
8 here.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Oh, oh, yeah, I see it.  
10 I'm sorry about that. I missed that one.

11 So, Mr. Reid, are you looking to say a few  
12 words?

13 ALDERMAN-ELECT REID: No, but thank you,  
14 Representative Gabel and Representative Hernandez. I  
15 wasn't planning on it since we had our Mayor-Elect Daniel  
16 Biss eloquently state and Alderman Burns -- or  
17 Alderman-Elect Burns eloquently state the need for the  
18 black community in Evanston to be in a single district.

19 I would add that, you know, as a city clerk,  
20 I've looked as the local election official, looked at this  
21 issue in the past. I would also add that the 8th Ward has  
22 a substantial -- which is on the south end of Evanston, a  
23 bit separated from the 5th Ward, has a substantial  
24 African-American community, and while I agree with

1 Mayor-Elect Biss, that I'm hoping that Evanston can  
2 maintain, you know, having several representatives to  
3 further, you know, relationships with representatives, I  
4 would hope that included in this remapping, the 8th Ward,  
5 the south part of Evanston's black community which shares,  
6 I think, that same interest, you know, with the northern  
7 black community of the 5th Ward would be in the same  
8 district.

9 I think we can achieve having -- unifying  
10 those two separate black communities as a single community  
11 of interest within the 18th District while still  
12 maintaining a boundary that gives us access to, you know,  
13 maintaining the relationships that we've had with a number  
14 of State Reps and State Senators.

15 So I'd just like that in consideration as  
16 well. Thank you very much. And also, great to see that  
17 this is the Committee redrawing the map. I'm looking at  
18 many of the members here and remembering my days in  
19 Springfield and seeing a lot of great folks on both sides  
20 of the aisle on this Committee. So good thing it's in good  
21 hands here. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

23 So I'm kind of looking through. Am I missing  
24 anyone before we move on to questions that would like to

1 say -- Any witnesses? I don't think I see any more.

2 Representative Gabel, thank you for the backup  
3 there.

4 So we'll go to questions. Leader Butler.

5 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: Thank you,  
6 Madam Chair. Thank you to all the witnesses for joining us  
7 on this Sunday afternoon.

8 I was going to ask Mr. Soroka, but it looks  
9 like he got on the phone there real quick. Oh, there we  
10 go. Mr. Soroka, are you available there?

11 SHLOMO SOROKA: I'm available.

12 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: Sorry. I saw  
13 you got on the phone, and I didn't want to interrupt you  
14 there.

15 I feel like I know Chicago neighborhoods  
16 pretty good, but I'm a guy from downstate. So West Ridge,  
17 help me out, is it like west of Rogers Park, kind of  
18 between Skokie and Rogers Park? Is that where West Ridge  
19 is?

20 SHLOMO SOROKA: People have different names  
21 for it. The area that we're talking about is around where  
22 Pratt and California is like at the center and it radiates  
23 north and south. It goes all the way up to the Evanston  
24 border on Howard on the north side. On the south side it

1 goes down to Peterson. After Peterson, it kind of peters  
2 out. On the west side, the western coordinates, it kind of  
3 goes all the way until, I'm going to say, Lawndale or  
4 Ridgeway, and on the east side goes almost to Pulaski.

5 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: Okay. And you  
6 had mentioned in your testimony that -- you had mentioned  
7 the figure 30,000 in the area. Is that 30,000 Orthodox  
8 Jewish residents in that area or what was that figure for?

9 SHLOMO SOROKA: I would say 30,000 is  
10 statewide.

11 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: Okay.

12 SHLOMO SOROKA: Among the majority of those  
13 30,000 are in this area. We can just do those numbers by  
14 looking at the number of synagogues, because an Orthodox  
15 Jew can't really live as an Orthodox Jew without having an  
16 Orthodox Jewish synagogue nearby.

17 So knowing that we have, you know, one or two  
18 synagogues in Lake County, you know, one or two in this  
19 other area, what their membership numbers are, so we're  
20 able to assess approximately how many are in the area and  
21 how many are in Lake View or other areas.

22 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: Okay. And  
23 then, and I know you kind of walked through the history of,  
24 you know, movement from Maxwell Street up north kind of



1 seems like. Has -- And maybe I missed it, but has the  
2 orthodox population kind of stayed centered for a while now  
3 for decades around this West Ridge/Skokie kind of area?

4 SHLOMO SOROKA: Yeah. I would say that -- In  
5 the last 70 years, the Orthodox Jewish community has  
6 remained anchored in the same area. It's kind of spread a  
7 little bit. There used to be, I would say, a few more  
8 dozen households south of Peterson that now have moved  
9 north of Peterson. The boundaries have expanded a little  
10 bit just because the community has grown, but it has  
11 remained anchored in the West Rogers Park/Peterson  
12 Park/Skokie and those neighborhoods.

13 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: Gotcha. Well,  
14 I appreciate you coming forward. I think this is -- As far  
15 as I know, this is the first time we have had some folks  
16 from the orthodox community step forward. I know I wrote  
17 some stories and saw some letters previously where you guys  
18 had expressed your interest in being involved and obviously  
19 having a community of interest, so I really appreciate you  
20 stepping forward today and bringing forward your issues and  
21 your concerns about redistricting.

22 And, Madam Chair, if you don't mind, I  
23 wouldn't mind saying congratulations and welcoming  
24 Mayor-Elect Biss. We may not agree often on a political

1 spectrum, but I am confident as somebody with his  
2 background and his passion for public service, he's going  
3 to do great things for the City of Evanston. So  
4 congratulations Mayor-Elect, former senator.

5 I did have a question for you, though. Dan,  
6 when you were in -- when either you were running for  
7 governor or you were in the legislature, did you have  
8 discussions or support kind of the independent maps of  
9 the -- independent redistricting process or what were your  
10 kind of thoughts on that, especially when you were running  
11 statewide?

12 MAYOR-ELECT DANIEL BISS: Well, I don't --  
13 Thank you, first of all, for the kind congratulations and  
14 the optimism for the next four years in Evanston. I hope  
15 to live up to that.

16 Yeah. My position on this issue hasn't  
17 changed, whether I was running for governor or serving the  
18 legislature now or now as Mayor-Elect. I prefer, much as  
19 the democrats in Washington do, an independent  
20 redistricting process. I also know that it's a very  
21 difficult process and we have to make do with the  
22 Constitution we have.

23 So I would, you know, respectfully submit  
24 the comments I made to the Committee and look forward to

1 the map that you're able to come up with.

2 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: Okay. Well, I  
3 would hope that we would have gotten to a point in Illinois  
4 where we would have a more independent process in the 2021  
5 remap. It doesn't seem like that's going to be the case.  
6 But hopefully, you know, moving forward, I do think there  
7 are still opportunities this year to try to work more in a  
8 open collaborative public fashion involving the public on  
9 things. I think we have thrown out some ideas for that,  
10 and I think the potential exists to get there. I don't  
11 know if we will get there. We'll see what happens with the  
12 process over the next several weeks. I have my thoughts on  
13 that.

14 But again, I appreciate you coming on, and I  
15 look forward to working with you in your new position for  
16 the next several years as a member of the legislature. And  
17 Evanston is certainly a great community in our state, and I  
18 do -- Again, I think it's going to be in good hands with  
19 you at the helm. So congratulations.

20 MAYOR-ELECT DANIEL BISS: Thank you. Good to  
21 see you.

22 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you, Leader  
23 Butler.

24 Representative LaPointe, do you have a

1 question?

2 REPRESENTATIVE LaPOINTE: I do, and thank you,  
3 Madam Chair.

4 First of all, I want to say thank you so much  
5 to everyone who came out today virtually to provide  
6 testimony. I'm sure we recognize, I know I do, that this  
7 probably isn't the only hearing that you've provided  
8 testimony to. You've probably provided it to the Senate,  
9 too. So we all just extra appreciate you sharing your  
10 experience and your insight on your own community and  
11 what's going on in terms of demographic shifts in Illinois.

12 I wish that there were representatives from  
13 some more groups because you all shared very important  
14 information that's nuanced. And to hear from city-elected  
15 officials or elected, not quite elected yet, but -- and the  
16 Muslim Civic Action Coalition and the Orthodox Jewish  
17 community, it's just very nuanced, and so I appreciate  
18 that.

19 I would say to my colleagues, there's a lot of  
20 interest groups who are not here, so let's make sure that  
21 we access that written testimony that people are going to  
22 be submitting in the near future.

23 I do have a few questions, and I know that  
24 what you just offered is summaries of written testimony, so

1 I certainly intend to access the written testimony.

2 But first, for the Muslim Civic Action  
3 Coalition. Reema, you mentioned a few things. You said  
4 that in the last -- I believe you said in the last ten  
5 years, we now have communities that didn't exist before,  
6 you have some communities under the umbrella of the Muslim  
7 communities in Illinois that grew and you have some that  
8 didn't make their voices heard, and I'm just -- Can you  
9 expand on that a little bit? Because that sounds really  
10 significant, what you shared, and so I'd like to hear more  
11 about, what are the communities that didn't exist in terms  
12 of Muslim-Americans in the last ten years, what communities  
13 grew and what were those communities that didn't make their  
14 voices heard?

15 REEMA KAMRAN: Thank you so much,  
16 Representative LaPointe, for that question. In terms of  
17 the communities that did not exist or that might have  
18 grown, when we were doing -- you know, this past year and a  
19 half or actually almost two years, like many of the  
20 community organizations, we were involved in census work,  
21 you know, boots on the ground, especially with COVID and  
22 many of the challenges that we all had trying to do census  
23 work and getting out the word about the importance of the  
24 census, educating communities that may not understand the

1 significance of the census for their own family members as  
2 well as the larger impact that it's going to have on their  
3 neighborhoods, we found that a lot of communities of faith  
4 were either not represented or may not have had an  
5 understanding of the importance of the census, so they  
6 might not have been counted in years past.

7           So when we're talking about communities that  
8 didn't exist, these might -- these usually include  
9 immigrant communities, refugee communities or communities  
10 that have been largely invisible because of many of the  
11 challenges and barriers that hard-to-count communities  
12 have, whether it's a hesitation to be counted or not an  
13 understanding of that being counted in the census will not  
14 affect their status if they are an immigrant or not a  
15 citizen or in the process of becoming a citizen or maybe --  
16 or may not have any current standing in that -- in that  
17 specific issue.

18           So it would be refugee communities, the  
19 community that Fatima was speaking about, which is the  
20 Nigerian community, that includes those that have some  
21 language barriers. The communities that have grown have  
22 really been the refugee, the immigrant communities that  
23 we've seen a significant number of -- that might have now  
24 been actually counted because there was this year more

1 than -- I'm sorry. This past census more than past years,  
2 there has been a concerted effort to ensure that we had a  
3 collective count towards that goal.

4 REPRESENTATIVE LaPOINTE: Okay. Terrific.  
5 That's super helpful. And I just want to underscore a fact  
6 that you shared that was new for me, and that is that  
7 Illinois has the most Muslims per capita in the United  
8 States. That is just so compelling. Do you have any sense  
9 on if that stat is going to hold, you know, after we get  
10 through this 2020 census?

11 REEMA KAMRAN: Yeah. I don't know. It was  
12 actually surprising to a lot of people. It's based on pure  
13 research, because when you just ask a general question, it  
14 is actually usually Texas and Michigan as well as New  
15 Jersey that come out as the states that have more Muslims  
16 per capita. Illinois has 2800 per capita, which is  
17 significantly larger. I think the other ones have 27 and  
18 26.

19 So we're not certain if that statistic will  
20 hold, but I do know that these are the numbers from 2021 --  
21 or 2021 that we had used in that data.

22 REPRESENTATIVE LaPOINTE: Terrific.

23 REEMA KAMRAN: I'm not sure if it will hold.

24 REPRESENTATIVE LaPOINTE: We'll keep talking

1 about that. And then one final question for you, and I  
2 appreciated your slides and the kind of very draft map that  
3 your group has started to put together. Can you say  
4 anything more explicitly about any take you have on the  
5 shifting of the very diverse Muslim populations, let's just  
6 say in Cook County, over the last ten years? And I know  
7 that's what we're all in the process of figuring out, but  
8 is there anything more explicit you can offer on that?

9 REEMA KAMRAN: So we do have some data, and  
10 I'm not the expert at Cook. I can tell you a little bit  
11 more about DuPage County. But we have seen significantly  
12 all across the state, specifically in ten different  
13 counties, a large increase in the Muslim population as a  
14 whole, whether -- And then I believe that in Cook County,  
15 that does hold that we have seen an increase in diversity  
16 and an increase in population amongst, you know,  
17 under-represented communities.

18 So that's -- I am happy to provide additional  
19 information to the Committee as I can gather it, but at  
20 this point, I do know that there has been a significant  
21 increase, generally, within -- within the different  
22 counties, and I believe currently there are ten different  
23 counties that have significant populations of Muslim  
24 communities, some having grown almost, I heard a number



1 like 300 percent. I think it was Kane, if I'm not  
2 mistaken.

3 So there's been a large group -- a large  
4 growth amongst, but I am happy to provide additional  
5 information, but I do not have it at hand.

6 REPRESENTATIVE LaPOINTE: Terrific. I so  
7 appreciate it, and those are my questions for now. Thank  
8 you, Madam Chair.

9 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Representative  
10 LaPointe. Those were great questions.

11 Do we have any further questions from members?  
12 Okay. Well, seeing none, that really --

13 REPRESENTATIVE LEADER BUTLER: I just have to  
14 say it's really nice to see Representative Bourne and  
15 Representative Croke's number one assistant both make  
16 appearances on this hearing today. So that's good.

17 REPRESENTATIVE BOURNE: Have more Committees  
18 on Sunday and you will see more of them.

19 CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ: I believe it. All right.  
20 Well, with that, that really concludes our committee for  
21 today.

22 I just really want to emphasize, it was  
23 remarked that, you know, having more community interest  
24 groups participate. We do have seven hearings left. I

1 believe it's about seven, and there's still opportunity. I  
2 want to just bring it up because I did mention the last  
3 time I chaired one of the committees that I did get a call  
4 because there was someone who wanted to participate, yet  
5 they thought they had to be regional. And I said, no, you  
6 can participate anywhere. You can be heard.

7 So the point is, there is right now the  
8 ability for individuals to participate on-line. It's  
9 easier. So I'm just emphasizing that there's seven to go,  
10 there can still be further participation. It's just on us  
11 to try to get that word out. So I'm just trying to take  
12 advantage right now that we've got seven left.

13 Once again, I want to thank everybody for  
14 taking the time on a Sunday afternoon. Really important  
15 work, and the participation is valuable to what we're  
16 doing. So everybody have a great afternoon, and we'll see  
17 you all soon.

18 With that, there's no further witnesses. The  
19 Committee will recess to the call of the Chair. Thank you  
20 all.

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22 (Adjourned at 2:53 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Jamie Jo Kinder, CCR No. 842, CSR No. 084.003306, do hereby certify that the foregoing hearing was taken by me in stenotype and thereafter reduced to typewriting under my direction; that said hearing is a true record of the hearing to the best of my ability. I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties, and further that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties thereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome.

  
Jamie Jo Kinder  
Certified Shorthand Reporter



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