

From: applications.administrator@capitol.local
To: [Senate Redistricting](#)
Subject: INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input
Date: Friday, October 1, 2021 11:47:03 AM

Date: 2021-10-01
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Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: Congressional

Message:

My name is Niloufar Hafizi and I submit this testimony on behalf of myself and Emgage Action, a c(4) organization that advocates for and civically engages America's Muslim and AAPI communities. I write to urge a vote against Senate Bill 6 because it splits up the minority communities in my area and prevents the AAPI community from electing a candidate of our choice. Moreover, SB 6 contains no competitive seats and will result in a House congressional delegation that fails to reflect who Texans are and will fail to address our concerns.

I was born and raised in Harris County, and have lived in Fort Bend County in congressional district 22 since 2014. Before these maps were released, my community hoped that Fort Bend's incredible population growth would help keep our county together. Fort Bend's total population has grown from under 600,000 to over 820,000 over the last decade. Fort Bend also has the highest percentage of Asian Americans in Texas; since the last census, the Fort Bend AAPI population has grown by over 83% to make up about 22% of Fort Bend's total population. The AAPI community here forms a community of interest of immigrant and second-generation Americans who share concerns about religious rights, rising levels of hate crime and hate speech, and non-discrimination. We also have similar issue-based concerns about flooding and infrastructure. The current U.S. House member representing most of Fort Bend County did and does nothing to address these concerns. He condoned racially charged language that targeted the Asian community during the election season, and since he has been in office he refuses to respond to residents' requests or work with the county to secure infrastructure funding for a more resilient Fort Bend.

The current shape of the CD-22 allows most of Fort Bend's concerns to go unheard. I and my community hoped that to better represent the concerns of AAPI residents, this committee would propose keeping Fort Bend and its Asian population together as much as possible in a compact district. Instead, the map proposed as SB 6 cuts up Fort Bend across three districts. AAPI populations are divided where they are densest, including in Sugarland; the Sugarland AAPI community is cut by a freeway into CD-07 and CD-22. CD-22 runs into Matagorda and Wharton Counties, areas that are more rural and not densely populated. Together, their population is about 80,000, less than ten percent of Fort Bend County's entire population. Matagorda and Wharton do not share policy concerns on infrastructure, race-related issues or other matters with the Fort Bend County portions of CD-22.

These district boundaries appear motivated by racial animus. They dilute the AAPI

population's vote across districts, and prevent us from forming an effective coalition that can elect a candidate of our choice. We would have a chance to wield the electoral influence of our numbers if the AAPI populations in CD-07 and CD-22 were kept together. The map overall also appears discriminatory. Ninety-five percent of Texas' population growth was driven by people of color, but the proposed map does not create any additional minority opportunity or influence districts. It eliminates a Hispanic opportunity instead, although Hispanic Texans are responsible for about half of Texas' population growth. It also creates an additional majority-white district, CD-38, in Harris County, an incredibly diverse county where the white population declined and the non-white population grew by about 25% -- and about 30% when one looks at voting age population.

Besides these concerns about racial gerrymandering, the process surrounding this map intentionally shut out the public. I would have liked to give this testimony in person, and to have analyzed the maps further, but was unable to come to the Capitol on short notice. Many members of my community faced the same issues. These maps were released Monday, and the hearing was set for Thursday morning. Texans spent months of previous hearings asking for at least two weeks to analyze the maps before the hearings. Texans also asked for five days' notice of any public hearings, and a virtual option. This committee ignored requests to make the redistricting process fair and accessible to public input. A powerful legislative committee that decides how much Texans' votes count should make this process open to the public.

In closing, keep similar communities together; draw districts like CD-22 as compactly as possible; and make the process fair and transparent. Texans deserve a redistricting process and maps worthy of a democracy, and SB 6 and this hearing process are not.

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